PEOPLE WITH BRAINS SHOULD TURN TO PAGE 666.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 390. FOR WEEK ENDING JUNE 20TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

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expressive of universal approval
concerning a medicine of rare value.

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SHORT STORIES

Edited by C. Arthur Pearson.

No. 390.] [One Penny.

For the Week ending June 20th, 1896.

A Strange Destiny.

I DIED twenty-five years ago, and, although my form is scarcely ethereal, I am as effectively non-existent as if I had been comfortably ferried over Styx and slumbered ten feet below the earth's surface. It will be necessary for me to explain that my name is, or was, Charles Conyngham, and my vocation that of a Continental messenger of Her Majesty's Foreign Office. In so remarkable a manner did I disappear, that in all probability the secretarial department at Downing Street, in conjunction with their neighbours over the way at Great Scotland Yard, still regard it as an unsolved mystery. In vain may they search, for I have ceased to exist; my personality has been lost for the past twenty-five years.

In 1871, England was obliged to exercise some ingenious diplomacy towards the newly-formed French Republic, and consequently in the middle of the year I was making two and even three journeys to Paris each week. Constant travelling like this soon wearies the most experienced, especially when arriving in London in the morning, only to return at night. The French, German, and Italian railways were to me as familiar as the Strand or Regent Street, for in ten years of Continent-trotting my brain had become a Bradshaw in itself, and I think I had seen all the so-called "sights," so delightful to the untravelled. A long journey to the Austrian or Turkish capital was very much more to my taste than the wearying monotony of the "Dover-Calais route," and I began to be heartily sick of it, as during the month I had been to Paris no fewer than thirteen times.

One August night, though excessively tired, I was compelled to set out again, and left Charing Cross by the mail train. Besides carrying important dispatches, a bag had been intrusted to my care which I knew contained a large sum in notes and gold, and which I had instructions to deliver to the British Ambassador. I was alone as far as Dover, but when I alighted on the pier the wind was blowing hard and the rain descending in torrents, indicative of "dirty" weather outside the harbour.

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"Calais boat this way, sir!" The words sounded above the disconsolate comments in English and the staccato sounds in objugatory French, so I retraversed the wet gangway, and soon had my precious bag placed in a position in the saloon where I could keep a watchful eye upon it.

Arriving at Calais soon after midnight, I entered the refreshment room and made a hearty meal, until the unwelcome words *"En voiture pour Paris"* were shouted. Then I went out, and selecting an empty first-class compartment, bade the porter deposit the bag, and, wrapping myself comfortably in my travelling rug, settled down for the remainder of the journey.

I dared not sleep whilst this quantity of gold was in my possession, and, fatigued as I was, I managed by dint of great effort to keep myself awake. It was always possible I might be watched and followed by thieves or emissaries of political societies; therefore, a loaded revolver reposed in my pocket ready for any emergency.

Few people were travelling that night, and I was fortunate enough to have the compartment to myself until we ran into Abbeville. Then there entered two well-dressed Frenchmen, who scrutinised me rather closely, and sank into the opposite corners of the carriage. Seldom I feel uneasy about my fellow passengers, but I confess that, as I regarded them, a shadow of distrust, of impending evil fell upon me. Instinctively I felt for my revolver, and assured myself it was in readiness if required, for somehow I was certain these men had been upon the channel boat, and were following me with an evil purpose.

But they sat opposite one another, smoking, and occasionally indulging in conversation, though never once turning towards me, and keeping their faces concealed as much as possible from the pale flickering ray of the carriage lamp.

As the train sped on, I became more fully convinced these men meant mischief. I looked at my watch, and found that in twenty minutes we should be due at Amiens, and determined to change into another carriage there. Patiently I sat gazing out of the window, watching the first grey streak of dawn break over the distant hills, and waiting for the next stoppage, when I suddenly felt a terrible blow upon the top of my skull. I remember no more! All was blank!

* * * * *

A burning, excruciating pain like the pricking of a thousand red-hot needles in my brain, a feeling that my eyes were being gouged out, and my temples beaten with hot irons. It was the most horrible torment I have ever experienced, yet I was gradually coming to, struggling out of what seemed to be a half dream, half stupor. Slowly the terrible throbbing in my head abated, and I found myself seated in an armchair in a handsomely furnished, but unfamiliar drawing-room. It was dimly lighted by tiny lamps, and gazing round in astonishment, I noticed a spacious fernery beyond, which looked like a mermaid's cave in the depths of the sea, so dense was the mass of greenery and so soft the splash of the miniature cascade.

My first thought was of my dispatches, and I felt for my pouch; but it was not there! Had I been robbed? Placing my hand on my chin, I was startled to find that I had a long beard plentifully besprinkled with grey, though yesterday I was cleanly shaved! And my bag of coin, where was that? I struggled to my feet, and, as I did so, my figure was reflected in a long mirror. I staggered backwards in amazement; for last night I saw a sprightly young man of thirty, but now I saw my hair was thin and grey, and my face so wrinkled and altered that I could not recognise it as my own.

Where was I? What could it all mean? Whilst these thoughts were passing through my mind, I espied a hand-bell, and tugged at the pull. My summons was quickly answered by a sharp-featured young man, who was evidently not a servant.

"Tell me, who brought me here? Whose house is this?" I asked impatiently.

The man gazed at me apparently in blank astonishment.

"I—er. You're not well, sir, I think. This is your own house."

"My house! And who are you, pray?"

"I am your secretary; but I—I'll return in a moment," he replied, and, evidently much terrified, he disappeared as quickly as if he had seen a phantom.

I had no time to reflect upon the mystery of the situation before there entered a tall, voluptuous looking woman, of what is called the Junoesque type, in evening dress, and ablaze with diamonds.

"Why, what have you said to Hallett? You've quite frightened him," she said, laughing. "How is it you are not dressed? You remember we promised to dine at Creswell's to-night."

"I—I don't understand you, madam," I gasped, for my brain was in a whirl.

"What's the matter with you? What has happened?" she cried in alarm. "Don't you know me, Rose, your wife?"

"My wife! No; I have never seen you before. This is some trick. Where is my bag of money?" I said in perplexity.

The look of distress deepened as she said:

"Calm yourself, my dear. You are not well, and must have advice."

"I want no advice," I replied. "I must resume my journey to Paris at once. Where are the clothes I wore, and the dispatches?"

"I do not know what you mean," exclaimed the woman who called herself my wife. "Your mind must be wandering, Frank."

"That is not my name. I am Charles Conyngham."

"No, you are under a delusion, dear," she replied in a softer tone, evidently intending to humour me. "You are Frank Godstone, and I am Rose Godstone, your wife."

"When and where did you marry me?"

"In Melbourne, eight years ago."

"In Melbourne. And where are we now?"

"This is our country home at St. Kilda, in Victoria. Is there anything else you would like to know?"

She said this with a smile, as if half inclined to believe I was joking.

"I married you eight years ago, you say. Then what year is this?"

She laughed mischievously as she replied:

"Come, Frank, this is not the first of April, so all this nonsense is out of place. You know well enough it is 1896——"

"What!" I cried, feeling myself growing rigid with amazement. "Yesterday was twenty-five years ago!"

I was certainly wide awake and sensible; but that I was myself I began to doubt, and at last came to the conclusion that I was not. I struggled to comprehend the situation, but utterly failed. How I came to be in Australia, the husband of such a wife, the owner of such a mansion, was a deep, inexplicable mystery. I felt

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light-headed, for this horrible suspense, and these unfamiliar surroundings were goading me to frenzy.

"There must be some serious misunderstanding between us, madam," I said earnestly. "I am not joking; for I certainly have not set eyes upon you before this evening, and am utterly at a loss to know who or what I am."

The woman who called me husband regarded me with a look of terror, as if she had suddenly become convinced of the truth of my words. Her face blanched, and she would have fallen had I not caught her and laid her upon a sofa. I rang the bell, and the maid-servant appeared.

"Your mistress has fainted; call someone to her assistance," I said, and, leaving the room, proceeded to explore the house from garret to basement. It was a splendid modern mansion, furnished with taste and elegance; and I found, on looking out of the windows, it was surrounded by well-kept lawns and clumps of fine old trees, now illumined by the pale moonlight, and transformed into a scene almost fairy-like.

Presently I was pacing the terrace, rapt in thought. The stars shone, the night wind sighed softly through the trees, and the air was filled with the subtle perfume of roses. How well I remember leaning upon the stone balustrade, gazing away to where the lurid reflection upon the sky denoted the distant city of Melbourne, and trying to account for my novel surroundings.

Utterly unable to realise the memorable journey to Paris had been made twenty-five years before, for it seemed but yesterday, though my aged appearance, my beard, the fact of my marriage, and my opulence, all combined to confirm the assertion the fainting woman had just made. But the thought of the lost money, and undelivered dispatches, troubled me most. In vain I tried to recount my actions on that night I left London; but, beyond the remembrance of the terrible blow I had sustained, I could recollect nothing. The anxiety was distracting, and as I paced the terrace with quick, impatient steps, I knew that if some solution of this horrible mystery did not soon present itself, I should go mad. I had a presentiment of insanity, and shuddered at the thought of the terrible derangement which hung over me as a Damoclean sword.

Suddenly I heard a footstep, and, turning, confronted the man who called himself my secretary.

"Layton, the manager of the Waljeers, has just arrived from Ballarat, and wishes to see you on important business, sir," he said.

"To see me! What for?"

"He desires instructions regarding the Waljeers claim. They have struck the lead at last, and the yield of gold is so rich that he advises you to float it as a company in the Melbourne market at once. Shall I bring him to you?"

"No," I replied. "Leave me to myself. I—I have not the slightest idea of your meaning."

"You must be unwell, sir," the man replied. "Surely you know Layton, who used to manage your mine at Poowong, and who is now in charge of the Waljeers?"

"I don't know him, and I have no desire to make his acquaintance. Send him away," cried I.

For a moment the man hesitated, then, muttering in an undertone, retired into the house.

It was not long before a maid-servant appeared, saying:

"Mistress would like to see you in the drawing-room, sir," and I obeyed the summons.

On entering I found the woman who called me husband seated upon a lounge chair, and near her stood a short stout old gentleman in a frock coat, and wearing *pince-nez*.

"Ah, my dear Godstone," exclaimed the latter, greeting me effusively, "how are you this evening?"

"I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance," I replied stiffly.

"Not know me? Come, come, think. Don't you remember Doctor Stanborough?"

"No, I don't."

The woman glanced significantly at him as he advanced towards me peering intently into my eyes.

"What have you been saying to your wife?" he asked abruptly.

"Saying? Why, the truth!" I replied. "She calls herself my wife; but I have never seen her before. Yesterday I was conveying some important dispatches between London and Paris, when—well I hardly know what happened; but I believe two ruffians stunned me, and I knew no more until I awoke this evening to find myself in a strange house, and claimed as husband by this lady. I believe there's some confounded trickery somewhere, and perhaps you can explain the whereabouts of the dispatches and money."

The doctor did not reply, but turning to her said gravely:

"Madam, this is very, very sad. I am afraid your husband's mind is affected."

"You are mistaken," I cried vehemently. "I am as sane as yourself; but if this horrible mystery is not soon elucidated, I feel I shall go mad."

"You are certainly not yourself to-night. We must see what treatment we can give you," said the doctor.

"I want none of your nostrums, sir. All I require are my dispatches and money. I am told I am in Australia; if so, I must return to England immediately and explain my absence."

"Doctor, my dear husband seems under the delusion he has been robbed of some important documents," explained she anxiously.

"I am under no delusion, madam," I said rather hotly. "All I desire explained is how I came to be here."

"Monomania, evidently," the doctor exclaimed in a low voice. "It develops frequently into the most violent forms of madness, and he will have to be kept in seclusion and closely watched."

"Understand me," I said angrily, "your fears as to my sanity are groundless. I believe I have fallen a victim to a vile plot; but I tell you I am being mistaken for some other man. I am Charles Conyngham of the Foreign Office, London."

"Very well, my dear fellow, very well," the doctor replied, placing his hand upon my shoulder. "We will believe it, if you wish. Calm yourself; remember your wife is weak and nervous."

I turned dejectedly away, for all my efforts to make myself understood had only been met with incredulity by the idiotic soft-spoken old doctor, who evidently believed that I was mad.

My position became more singular every moment, and in distraction I strode out into the grounds and plunged into a tall wood of dark gum-trees. On and on I walked, heedless of where my footsteps led me, until at last, tired out, I sank upon a felled trunk and gave myself up to another mental struggle.

All was silence, save for the weird croaks and screams of the night birds, and the faint rustle of the leaves overhead. The cool wind fanned my heated temples with

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such a soothing effect that I fell asleep. The morning sun was penetrating the thick foliage when I awoke and made my way out of the forest. Without much difficulty I retraced my steps to the house, only to become more intensely puzzled. My *soi-disant* wife was too unwell to leave her room, and I roamed aimlessly about the place, seeking to discover something—I knew not what.

One room I entered was evidently a study; my own den, possibly! Glancing at the books, a few choice paintings, and the row of telephones, I seated myself at the littered writing-table. Turning over the papers before me and examining them, I saw they related to mining enterprises and transactions involving large sums. Many of the letters and memoranda were unmistakably in my handwriting, but the signatures were "Frank Godstone," and the letter paper bore the heading "Great Poowong Gold Mines, Office, 296, Collins Street, Melbourne." My eyes fell upon a calendar and I saw I had not been deceived; it was the year 1896.

From the doctor's words on the previous night, it seemed clear that if I remained I should be placed under restraint as a lunatic, so what should hinder me from returning to Europe, and endeavouring to find out what befel me on that midnight journey? At the thought of funds I rose, and searching the drawers of the writing-table, discovered a cash-box. A bunch of keys was in my pocket, one of which opened the box, and eagerly counting the contents, I found nearly three hundred pounds in gold and notes. This would suffice for the journey and with great joy I transferred the money to my pocket.

In haste I wrote a few lines to my mysterious wife, informing her of my intentions, begging her not to follow me, and promising to return as soon as I obtained the information required to restore my peace of mind.

Calling Hallett, my secretary, I gave him the letter, with instructions not to deliver it at the sick woman's room until the evening; then gathering a few things into a hand-bag, I left the house. The next train bore me to Melbourne, and that same evening I was on board a P. and O. boat steaming out of Port Phillip.

From the first I was beset by terrible anxiety and fear lest I should be recognised, for though a victim to circumstances, I was, nevertheless, a delinquent, and I knew not into whose hands the undelivered dispatches had fallen, or what complications had ensued thereby.

On my return to London, however, I soon became assured that my appearance had changed beyond recognition, for on various pretexts I conversed with men who had been my intimate associates, none of whom now claimed my acquaintance.

The task of tracing my past career was fraught with many difficulties, and it was in Paris that I discovered a clue to the mystery. While searching the file of the *Figaro* for 1871, I found that on August the fifth, the night mail from Calais to Paris, while approaching Amiens, ran into some trucks, and was completely wrecked, seven persons being killed and twenty injured. But there was also enacted a terrible tragedy, for it appeared that in a first-class compartment were two men, one having among his baggage a strong leather bag, containing a large sum in English notes and gold. Both received severe blows about the head in the collision, but one, in order to obtain possession of the money, took advantage of the confusion immediately following the accident by shooting his fellow traveller dead. The murderer was making off with that portion of his booty that was portable when he was apprehended and conveyed to Paris.

Here was another complication! I could not be the murderer, neither could I be the murdered man, yet the bag of gold referred to was evidently the one intrusted to my care.

Eagerly I scanned the papers of the following days and found reports of the examination before the *juge d'instruction*, and subsequent trial of the accused for wilful murder. He was stated to be young and well dressed, though conducting himself strangely, refusing to give his name or any account of himself whatever, and preserving an immutable silence throughout the many days the proceedings lasted. The trial must have been a celebrated one, judging from the reports; and the prisoner, through a slight discrepancy in the corroborative evidence, escaped the guillotine, and was sentenced to transportation for life to the penal settlement of New Caledonia.

Here the information ended; and though I searched the copies of the papers for two years subsequently, I found nothing more. It was clear my only hope lay in an interview with this mysterious convict, who might enlighten me as to my connection with the tragic affair; and to this end I sought out an official in the Prisons Department, who was once well known to me. He had since retired into private life, and in common with others, did not remember me. Representing myself as an English solicitor endeavouring to trace a next of kin, and offering to pay handsomely for information, I prevailed upon him to seek an interview with the chief of the department, and ascertain where the man who had been sent to penal servitude could be found.

A few days later, when I called, a memorandum was placed in my hand certifying that after remaining five years at the settlement, prisoner No. 7,403, committed for life for murder, had escaped in company with Auguste Durand, another convict, by means of a boat. The supposition was that they were drowned at sea, if not, they must have landed on the Queensland coast.

To discover this man Durand was no easy matter; but, if successful, he might furnish me with the whereabouts of his whilom companion. I was dubious about the result of my search, for might I not be on the wrong track after all? Nevertheless I proceeded to Brisbane without delay, and in nearly all the chief newspapers in the Australian colonies caused to be inserted a brief paragraph to "Auguste Durand, late of Yengen," stating that his companion upon the voyage from the island to the mainland in 1876 wished particularly to meet him, as he had something important to communicate. This was the only means by which I could hope to find him, and congratulating myself upon having composed an artfully worded invitation, patiently awaited its result.

Several weeks passed without an answer, and I was vainly trying to devise some other method by which to reach the escaped convict, when one day I was informed by the hotel waiter that a gentleman desired to see me. I naturally concluded it was he, and expressed my willingness to receive him.

Judge my dismay however, when there was ushered in no less a person than my secretary!

"Well, old fellow," said he familiarly, offering his hand; "and why all this confounded mystery? I saw the advertisement in the *Argus*," he continued, "and, concluding something was up, left Melbourne at once. What is it?"

"The advertisement?" I gasped.

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"Yes. You want to see me."

"You are mistaken; I do not."

"But your advertisement was addressed to Auguste Durand, your humble servant, who shared your lot in that living tomb at Yengen, and who escaped with you!"

"What? Is this true?" I asked in astonishment. "Was I convicted for murder?"

"Of course you were, and I for forgery. But you seem to be as insane as when you left St. Kilda so suddenly six months ago. What's the matter with you?"

"Are you Auguste Durand?" I asked.

"That's my baptismal cognomen, though John Hallett suits me better just now."

"Then hear me," I exclaimed. "Perhaps I am not quite myself, but I have forgotten all. Tell me how we escaped, why I am rich, and you my servant."

He gazed at me incredulously for a moment, and after reiterating his opinion that I had taken leave of my senses, related the story of our escape.

Narrated briefly, it seemed we were pals in the same labour gang, and had plotted our escape for many months, until one day, finding a boat in which a keg of water and some biscuits had been conveniently placed, we took advantage of the opportunity. After drifting countless days upon the Coral Sea under a burning sun, we landed at last, more dead than alive, near Port Curtis. Overjoyed at our freedom, we at once commenced to seek a livelihood, and at Walloon turned miners. Fortune smiled upon me. I prospered, bought claims, and profited largely by speculation, though my companion, always unlucky, existed upon my charity. After seven years at the diggings, I married a wealthy woman, and removed to Melbourne.

"And what is my present position?" I asked, when he had concluded.

"You are the owner of two of the richest gold mines in Victoria; and I, always a Lazarus, am your confidential secretary. Most confidential," he added, smiling: "the master convicted of murder, and the servant of forgery."

By this narrative the blank in my life had been filled, and I became aware it was myself, the mysterious convict, I had been endeavouring to trace.

Was I a murderer? That I was innocent seemed clear, for it was only reasonable to suppose that after the collision my fellow travellers attempted to rob me, and that in protecting my charge I fired the fatal shot. Seeing I had killed the thief, and fearing the consequences I filled my pockets with the money and was decamping when arrested. Why I refused to give any account of myself at the trial did not seem so obvious; but after much deliberation I became convinced of the fact, by no means unknown in medical science, that in the collision, the terrible blow I had sustained upon the head caused me to lose all consciousness of the past.

From that moment I commenced an entirely fresh existence, remembering nothing of what had occurred before, and was therefore unable to tell even my name and nationality at the trial. The Foreign Office was either in ignorance of my position, or refrained from interfering from some unexplained cause; and thus for twenty-five years I had lived totally oblivious to the events anterior to the blow which so strangely affected my brain. On that memorable night in my own drawing-room, I must have struck my head against some hard substance—the corner of the mantelpiece probably—and this, as a counteraction, restored me to consciousness, though obliterating the remembrance of the intervening years.

On my return to St. Kilda, my wife welcomed me warmly; and, after I had explained the cause of my sudden absence and apparent insanity, she went to her room, returning with a sealed official envelope.

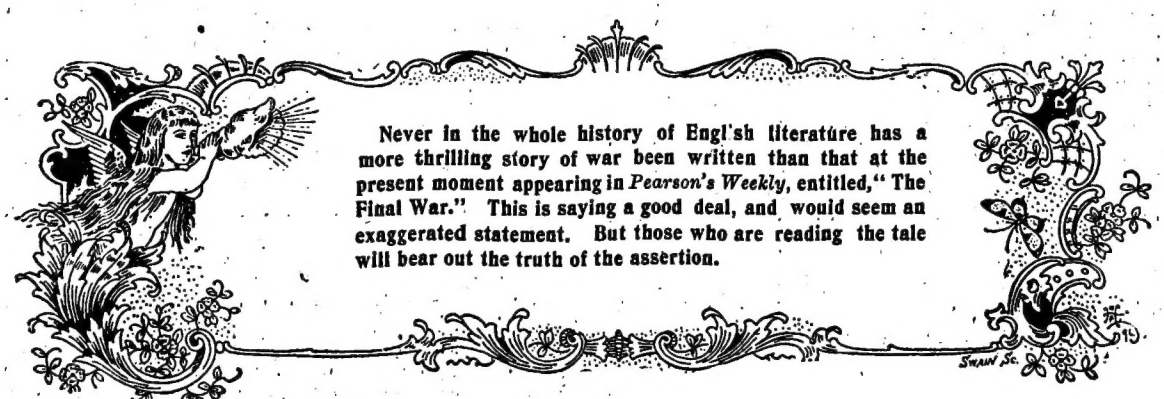
"This," she said, "you confided to my safe keeping after our marriage. It may be the lost dispatch."

It was. I grasped it eagerly, and read the superscription, then placed it on the fire and watched the flames consume it.

From that day I commenced life afresh, and can safely assert there is not a happier pair than Rose and I in all the colony.

Durand is no longer my secretary, but the keeper of a fashionable restaurant in Melbourne. I need scarcely add it was my money that purchased the business.

Francis S. Palmer.


Never in the whole history of Engl'sh literature has a more thrilling story of war been written than that at the present moment appearing in *Pearson's Weekly*, entitled, "The Final War." This is saying a good deal, and would seem an exaggerated statement. But those who are reading the tale will bear out the truth of the assertion.

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THE SALVATION LASS

CAPTAIN GRACE threw open the window of her tiny room and looked out at the bright sunshine, the blue sky, the drifting, fleecy clouds.

"Glory to God," she murmured; "what a perfect day!"

Then she set the coffee on to boil, toasted some bits of bread, and boiled an egg. Before partaking of this simple breakfast, she bent her shapely brown head and whispered:

"Give me strength, Father, for to-day."

That was Captain Grace's daily morning prayer. Strength to sustain her through each day's work, to help her bear the taunting words, the insulting laughs, the profanity and vile language hurled at her on her rounds; strength to uphold her in her visits to the slums, and to push open the swinging doors of public houses and attack the devil in his very stronghold.

Captain Grace was a beauty, and that fact made her life all the harder. The face that looked out from under the ugly army bonnet was the face of an angel, with its ivory-like complexion, in which roses came and went; with its clear, resolute, turquoise eyes, its dimpled chin, straight little nose, and soft red lips.

The plain uniform of the Salvation Army, which renders a homely woman an absolute fright by its very severity, only emphasised the loveliness of the girl's face and figure. Too well did the young warrior know her charms. She heard them discussed by men at street corners, in tram cars, and in the public restaurants.

"What a bloomin' little daisy," said a rowdy.

"What a little darling," said a man about town.

Captain Grace often wished she were as ugly as Ensign Jerusha, who was pock-marked and squint-eyed, and thus escaped many of Satan's javelins. But a regular life, constant exercise and occupation, and high, pure thought, combined to produce a beauty which grew from day to day and from which the earthly elements were fast being eliminated.

The girl was gentle, refined, and intelligent. She had sacrificed many of the sweets and joys of life to lead this curious existence. She was very reticent about her past, lived only for her work, and to lay up treasure where moth and rust do not corrupt.

In the slums she was known, loved and blessed. Her small hands had pressed the aching head of the suffering, and scrubbed the floors of the slatternly. Her smiles and tears had mingled with those of the unfortunates of earth. Her cheering words, gracious deeds and prayers, were a sweet savour in the nostrils of the despairing.

And yet Captain Grace was a girl with a girl's love of pleasure, pretty things, ease, and comfort. She battled fiercely at times with these temptations—faint and weary with warfare, longing to yield, to leave the strife, to taste happiness and human joy. But her conscience ever sounded a trumpet call, and Captain Grace, obeying, sprang again to the conflict.

Just as she took down her dark blue bonnet from the wall there came a knock at the door. She opened it.

Miss Francesca Fadd stood there.

Miss Francesca Fadd was rich, pretty, kind-hearted, generous, and always had a nice hobby horse for herself to ride.

Just now her hobby horse was the Salvation Army.

She had attended the meetings, wept in her lace handkerchief, subscribed liberally, and confided to her dear friends that she felt herself chastened and comforted. She had hunted up the pretty captain, whose face had attracted her, and had made as great a pet of the girl as the young devotee would permit.

"Good-morning, dearest," said the caller.

"Good-morning, dear Francesca," replied the captain. "Come in."

Francesca seated herself and took a long survey of her friend.

The two girls formed a curious contrast. Miss Fadd was a study in brown velvet and sable. Big diamonds quivered in her pink ears, and a huge cluster of violets shook out their perfume from her breast. Her great brown eyes flashed questioningly on the other, who stood pale, serious, a trifle sad, but resolute.

"Have you decided, Grace?"

"Yes, Francesca."

"Well, you will come with me—give over this hard life, live with me, be my companion and sister? You know I am alone, rich, my own mistress. You shall have every luxury. We will travel."

Captain Grace lifted her little red roughened hand.

"No more, no more, I beg," she said quietly; "it cannot be."

Miss Francesca Fadd burst into tears.

She was honestly disappointed. She was fond of the girl. And she fancied the idea of playing Lady Bountiful.

Moreover, she liked to have her own way.

But Captain Grace would not surrender. She had marked out her path in life, and though it was rough and stony and might lead to a place of skulls, yet would she follow it.

An hour after this little scene Captain Grace reported for duty at headquarters. Her sweet face was like a ray of sunshine in the gloomy barracks.

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"Good-morning, Captain," said a black-eyed girl in a big gingham apron, grey shawl, and black hat—the regulation slum uniform.

"Good-morning, lieutenants," returning the salute; "do you feel like fighting to-day?"

"Yes, Captain," was the quick response. "I could down the devil and all his angels this morning."

"That's right," said Captain Grace cheerfully.

Lieutenant Sally was one of Captain Grace's *protégés*. She was a brand plucked from the burning. Captain Grace had rescued her from a life of frightful misery and sin, and Sally's devotion to her friend was unbounded.

The two received orders to sell the *War Cry* until two o'clock; after that they were to go about their regular slum duties. Up and down the streets, in and out of buildings, went the pair. They were repulsed and chaffed by turns. Doors were banged in their faces, and coarse jokes cracked at their expense.

But they did not appear to mind. They chatted animatedly, compared sales, encouraged each other; once Captain Grace helped a feeble tottering old woman across the street, under the very noses of the horses, and once Lieutenant Sally wiped the tears from a dirty little child's face and gave it a cake.

It was just as they were about to make their final call in a Chrystie Street public-house, that its doors were violently dashed open, and a dreadful old tramp, sodden, filthy, bedraggled, was kicked out on the pavement.

He was a pitiful sight. Shaking and trembling, he stood gazing vacantly about, then suddenly burst into tears.

Captain Grace hesitated one moment.

"Lieutenant," she said calmly, "I will meet you round at the Norfolk Street tenement as soon as possible. I have something to do here."

Lieutenant Sally saluted and departed. Then with a face pale as death, but inwardly glowing with a sublime passion, Captain Grace approached the poor old wayfarer standing there alone, and wiped the tears from his wrinkled cheeks with a trembling hand.

"Come, brother," she said gently; "come with me."

And holding him by his ragged sleeve, Captain Grace steered him along street after street, until she had landed him safely in one of the refuges established and maintained by the Army for such as he.

Then unwittingly she set her face towards her Golgotha.

It was nearly four o'clock when she entered the tenement. Up the black creaking stairs she picked her way to the fourth storey, pausing at a rickety door.

The room she entered was quite fresh and neat from its recent scrubbing. There was a pot of scraggly geranium in the window. A little boy of six was playing with some battered toys upon the floor. A pale face, white as the flabby pillow on which it lay, looked up with a wan smile as she entered.

"How are you to-day, my dear?" asked Captain Grace, as she bent over the sick woman. "Better? Ah! that's good. Has Lieutenant Sally been here?"

"Yes; she went downstairs about fifteen minutes since. See how nice she has made everything look."

"Yes, the Lieutenant is a hard worker," said Captain Grace, trying to mend a disjointed doll for the child, who exhibited his treasure with pride.

There were various other little services her quick eye noticed, and the time slipped away in their performance.

Suddenly there was a commotion. Sounds of hurrying feet and confused murmurs, deepening to a sullen swell of voices, were heard.

Across the threshold, in through the keyhole, in every cranny of the tumbledown door, something grey and ghastly came drifting and creeping in little wreaths and puffs.

And in an instant a terrible voice somewhere shrieked the awful word: "Fire!"

A terrible voice shrieked the awful word: "Fire!"

The engines came leaping like live things down the narrow street. There were frenzied shouts, cries, prayers, tumult, chaos.

Like flies, the wretched inhabitants of the wretched tenements clung to the walls, the windows, the narrow fire-escapes. There was the clatter of horses' hoofs, the bang of the ladders as the fireman flung them in place, and, above all, the heavy drone and hum of the ponderous engines.

"Take her first," said Captain Grace, indicating the sick woman, as a big brawny fireman, his eyes blazing with heroic excitement, plunged through the crashing window into the room. He gave the Salvation Army girl a look of sturdy admiration, and went down the ladder with the woman in his arms.

The child was clinging about Captain Grace's neck, his little face buried on her shoulder.

"Don't be frightened, darling," said the girl, patting him gently; "the good man will come back."

He came, stretching his arms out tenderly for the child.

"Keep a stiff upper lip," he shouted to her amid the smoke, the falling of timbers, the wavering of the floor under her feet.

It was just then that the billows of smoke rolled apart for a moment and the crowd saw the Salvation Army girl.

She was kneeling in prayer.

Through that maddened, cursing crowd, made up of roughs, loafers, and bruisers, ran a groan.

Men old in crime turned their hardened faces away the black smoke shut her again from sight.

Then came the last fearful crash, and Captain Grace—steadfast, brave, faithful unto death—was promoted.

Esther Noanes.

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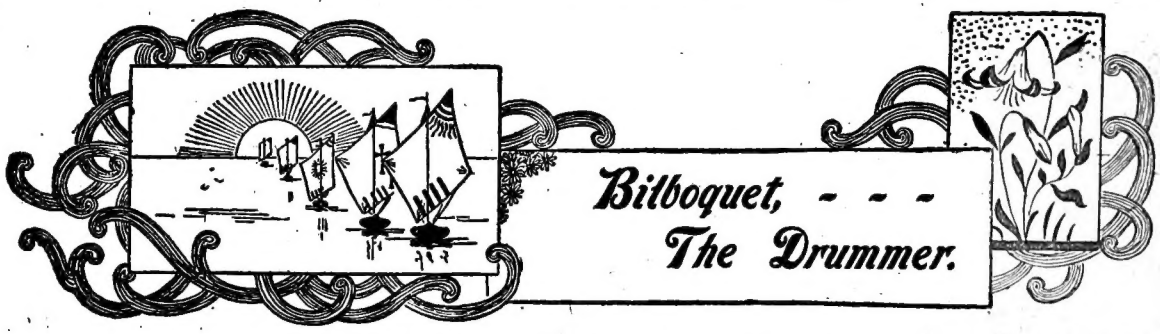

Bilboquet, - - - The Drummer.

IN 1812, in the Ninth Regiment of the line, there was a drummer boy only thirteen years of age, a child of the troop, whose true name was Frolut, though the soldiers called him nothing but Bilboquet. Truly, with his tall thin body, surmounted by a big round head he certainly did resemble the object which had earned him the sobriquet.

One morning, the 12th of July, if I remember aright, the general in command received orders from the Emperor to take up his position on the other side of a narrow ravine, a dangerous place at the best of times, and now defended by a battery of six cannon commanding its approaches and our entire file of soldiers as well. To reach the place designated by the Emperor, it was necessary to take this battery on the banks of the Dwina, for the events that I am relating to you took place in the famous campaign against Russia.

All at once they see coming at full gallop an aide-de-camp of the general bearing the order for two companies of the sharpshooters to advance upon the battery. Three-fourths of them were bound to be killed, and the Voltigeurs, in spite of their intrepidity, point to the yawning cannon and grumble openly.

The captain had twice ordered the drum-major to call the tambours to the front to beat the charge, but he remained leaning upon his long staff, wagging his head, and little disposed to obey.

All this while Bilboquet was seated astraddle his drum, his eyes upon his chief, his lips whistling softly to himself an air of the fife, and his fingers tattooing the charge. As the command to forward comes again, and for the third time from the captain, he leaps to his feet, places his drum-sticks in position, passes under the nose of the drum-major, and with a scornful "Come on, old girl, come on!" pours out in a single phrase all the anger and insults that he has treasured in his heart.

The drum-major raises his cane, but it is too late, Bilboquet is at the head of the two companies, and beating the charge like a madman. The soldiers follow him and rush upon that terrible battery. The cannons roar, the Voltigeurs roll in the dust, many of them to rise on more; the smoke, blown by the wind, envelopes us like a cloud, the noise deafens us, but as it lifts a moment and floats away we can still see, upright before us, not twenty steps in advance, the dauntless figure of the little drummer beating the charge. We could even hear, feeble as it was, the sound of his instrument passionately bidding defiance to every Cossack in creation.

The Voltigeurs rush on, Bilboquet always ahead of them with his ceaseless rataplan. The battery roars again, a perfect storm of shot pouring upon the infuriated *débris* of our two beautiful companies—scarcely fifty men remain of the brave two hundred—and never had the drum-major sounded the charge as Bilboquet sounds it now—sternly, boldly, and, fired by the fever of vengeance, he plies his arms with the strength of twenty. When the smoke lifts anew the battery is taken.

In the meantime, Napoleon, mounted upon a knoll to the right, 10,000 soldiers of the Guard behind him, watches them as they execute his orders, and as the remnant of the Voltigeurs enters the battery, he signs to an aide-de-camp, who gallops away, to return almost immediately.

"How many?" the Emperor asks him, as he stops before him, "how many crosses will be needed to-morrow?"

"Forty," the officer replies, "forty—the rest are dead."

* * * * *

And the next day, as Napoleon had said, regiments were gathered together to see the distribution of the medals to the gallant handful who had executed so faithfully the Emperor's will. One by one the names of the survivors had been announced, and the cross of honour bestowed. The ceremony is ended, and all are about to retire, when suddenly there is a stir among the soldiers and a shrill voice sounds from the ranks:

"But me," it cries. "Me—you've given me nothing!" and General B——, who had charge of the distribution of the crosses, turns about to find planted before him our little friend Bilboquet, his cheeks as red as fire and his eyes full of tears.

"You!" cries the officer astounded; "you, my boy. Why, what do you want me to give you? What do you expect?"

"The cross like the others," Bilboquet promptly answered; "it was I who beat the charge on the battery—I was the first to enter!"

"And you thought we had forgotten you! But you are too young, my boy, to have the cross yet," said the general kindly, seeing that he was only a child; "we will give it to you when you've a beard on your chin like the others. Here's something to console you while waiting," and, dipping his hand into his pocket, he drew forth a twenty-franc piece and held it out to the little fellow.

Bilboquet looked at it, but without a thought of taking it, great tears rolling from his eyes and down his cheeks as, motionless as stone, he stood before the general. Even those who had teased him most, touched by his grief, were about to intercede for him. Bilboquet, however, did not give them time, and suddenly, as if seized with a new idea, reached out his hand, took the money from the general, and, without more ado, put it in his pocket, saying as he turned away:

"Thanks, my general; it will do another time."

* * * * *

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Not long after the taking of the battery of the Dwina, the French troops entered Smolensk victorious and jubilant, Bilboquet with them, of course, and greatly pleased at the sights about the city, which he had asked to be allowed to visit almost at the moment of arrival. Yet, after all, it seemed to be the faces of the people in which he took the greatest interest, considering and examining them after the fashion of an amateur choosing merchandise.

I must admit, however, that it was not the peasants he regarded thus, with their long and bushy beards; doubtless they were well enough, and bountifully supplied, but of such an ugly, unpleasant red that Bilboquet, after a moment's scrutiny, turned away his eyes and continued his way.

At last, wandering along in this fashion, our *petit tambour* came to the Jewish quarter, for the Jews of Smolensk, like the rest of the Jews of Poland and Russia, confine themselves to a certain quarter.

When Bilboquet entered it you can imagine his delight, for of all the beards in the world the Jews assuredly have the loveliest, long, silky, and black as ebony, and it was beards the little drummer-boy was hunting. Some half way up the street he found the shop he wanted, the master of it bearded like a Turk.

"Vot vill you haf, my leetle sir?" cried the merchant civilly, as he crossed the threshold, "vot can I gif you?"

"Your beard," replied Bilboquet, without stopping to parley.

"My beard!" repeated the Jew, astonished, "you are joking!"

"I am not," said Bilboquet again, placing his hand upon the pocket where his money rested; "but do not think I want to rob you; here's a napoleon—you can give me change," and he threw it upon the counter between them.

In vain did the merchant endeavour to make Bilboquet hear reason. He was as obstinate as a blind horse, and engaged in such a wrangle that before long he attracted the attention of some soldiers passing in the street, who stopped to learn the motive of the quarrel. The notion of the little drummer boy struck them as so particularly funny that they sided with him, and compelled the unfortunate proprietor to give up his beard, one of them, the braggart as well as the barber of the regiment, drawing a razor from his pocket and shearing him without mercy or lather.

Having horribly skinned the Jew, he gave the shearing to the delighted Bilboquet, who carried it at once to the tailor of the regiment, and had it sewn up to a piece of sheep-skin taken from a broken drum. All this was the talk of the regiment for several days, but as no one could get from him what he intended to do with it, it was forgotten in other things, for we were now on the march again.

With the history of this campaign my story has nothing to do. I need only remind you that from the time of our arrival at Moscow misfortunes began, the cold and devastation depriving us of all our resources. Everyone returned as best he could, and it was with difficulty that a few regiments could be kept together to represent the body of the army and obey the orders of the general. Bilboquet's was one of these, and he was of the rear guard that prevented the thousands of Cossacks who followed the army from massacreing the unfortunate and solitary soldiers.

One day they had just retreated across a little river, and to retard the pursuit of the enemy the general had ordered the destruction of the bridge over which they had passed, a fragile wooden one; but the barrels of gunpowder hastily placed produced but little effect, and though the arches were displaced and thrown into the water, the framework caught and remained resting upon a single beam, which so held it that the enemy on arrival could easily secure and reconstruct it.

The general, knowing that the safety of the entire army depended upon the destruction of this bridge, ordered back the sappers to cut the beam and tear away the clinging framework.

As they were ready to embark, however, the enemy arrived on the other bank of the river and began such a rain of bullets that it seemed impossible for any sapper to reach it alive. They were about to give up and to defend themselves as best they could, when all at once they saw a soldier leap from the ranks into the river, his axe upon his shoulder.

The plunge carried him out of sight, of course, but soon he reappeared, his long flowing beard and peculiar cap showing him to be a sapper—thus offering himself as a sacrifice for the safety of others. That the water around him boiled with the bullets of the enemy you can be sure, nevertheless, he continued to advance bravely, vigorously, and five minutes later was at work upon the beam, sheltered behind the broken framework. A dozen blows and it crashed into the river, and the sapper was on his way to the bank again.

But picture our amazement, as mad with joy, we rushed to the edge to greet him, to find that it was the little Bilboquet, with a black and glossy beard suspended from the end of his chin.

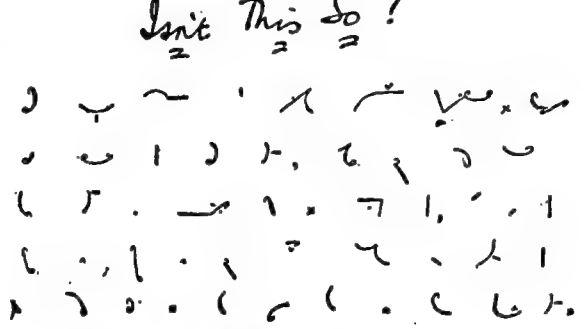
"What does this mean? What is this masquerade?" cried the voice of the general behind us; "is it you again, giddy-head?"

"Yes, my general, it is I, Bilboquet," answered the child; "you said you'd give me a cross when I'd a beard upon my chin. Here is a famous one, for I wasn't stingy, and spent the whole of the money you gave me for it!" and he drew himself up with an air of pride.

The general, thunderstruck at such bravery and shrewdness, held out his arms to Bilboquet as if he had been a man, and taking the cross from the lapel of his own coat, fastened it with his own hand in the buttonhole of his drummer's jacket.

It is upon the shoulders of the other *petits tambours*, you can rest assured, that the drum-major now establishes the time.

J. P.



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THE WYTHECOMBE MYSTERY.

BY JOHN K. LEYS, *author of "The Tenth of June," etc., etc.*

SUMMARY.

WHILE on a sketching tour in Wales, LAUNCELOT VERE gets into a dangerous position on the face of a precipice. His life is saved by WINIFRED DENVERS, to whom he becomes engaged. On the wedding morning LAUNCELOT disappears, and Miss UNWIN, the village schoolmistress, disappears at the same time. HAROLD KENYON, a friend of LAUNCELOT'S, leaves Wythecombe in search of his friend, and goes to London. He finds that the missing man has drawn £75 from his bank, and also discovers several sketches of Miss UNWIN in the artist's room. He interviews the guard of the train by which Miss UNWIN travelled to London, and finds that she was met by a man corresponding in description to VERE. On return to town he finds that Miss UNWIN has been murdered on Hampstead Heath. The trial reveals the fact that she and VERE were at one time very friendly, and that the revolver found by the deceased belongs to VERE.

KATHERINE DALE, a young lady with whom HAROLD KENYON is in love.

PAUL SHENSTONE, engaged to KATHERINE DALE.

REV. MARK DENVERS, Rector of Wythecombe, and WINIFRED'S father.

MR. BEAUMONT, a solicitor, and friendly with VERE.

MR. DAUNT, an old lawyer, and friendly with KENYON.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RIVALS.

PAUL SHENSTONE was one of those truly enviable persons who never allow their feelings to interfere with the carrying out of their resolutions. He had injured his cause with Kate by showing his jealousy of Harold Kenyon. That was clear enough. Therefore he at once resolved to make his peace with her; and he shrewdly suspected that he might possibly turn the blunder he had made to good account.

He called on Kate the very next morning, and with much apparent frankness apologised for what he called his abominable temper the night before.

Like all generous-minded people, Kate was averse to receive an apology, and inclined to believe, simply because it was offered, that she herself had been in some way to blame. She begged Paul to think no more of the matter, and began to think that she had judged him harshly the night before. And when he went on to say that she was, of course, a better judge than he could be as to what persons she should see, her heart fairly relented to him. She thought for the moment that he was more like what he used to be when they were first engaged, not the hard and cold being he had shown himself lately.

She smiled kindly on him; and after a little ordinary talk he rose to take his leave.

"Won't you stay to see mamma?" asked Kate; "she will be in in ten minutes."

"Not to-day, I think. But, Kate, before I go, would you mind telling me what day you would like fixed for the great event? We must settle it some time in advance, you know."

"You won't put me off again, Kate, will you?"

The smile died out of the poor girl's face; and the look which had become habitual to her during the last few weeks—the look of one who carries a bitter grief in silence, came back to her eyes.

"You said the first half of October, if you remember," added Paul.

"Did I?" she cried with a start. "That is very near now."

Shenstone could have stamped with impatience; but he held himself well in hand, and answered with a gentle, deprecatory smile:

"You won't put me off again, Kate, will you?"

"N—no. I don't mean that."

"Then let us say the twelfth, if that will suit you. I shall have time to give the necessary notices, and so on. May I fix it for the twelfth?"

Kate's reply was inaudible; but her lover took it for an assent. He thanked her, pressed her hand, and touched her cheek with his lips, knowing well enough that she would be better pleased with this perfunctory embrace than with a more fervent one. Then he left her at once, lest the tacit consent she had given should be recalled, and went along the Darnport road at a rapid pace. The road was empty, but for a farmer's man driving a cart of fodder. The man noticed and wondered at the gleam of triumph in Shenstone's eye, the suppressed smile of keen satisfaction that rested on his lips.

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But Kate?

She threw herself on the sofa, and buried her face in the cushions. No sound of weeping was heard in the room; her grief was too bitter for tears.

"Oh God!" she cried suddenly, lifting her pale face heavenward. "Can it be that on account of a foolish promise, Thou dost demand this sacrifice at my hands?"

There was no answer. The girl had no one to give her counsel. Her mother, who was kindness itself, would feel distressed if she told her her trouble, and would probably advise her to break off the match, as the easiest thing to do under the circumstances. Kate did not want to be told what would be the easiest and pleasantest thing to do. She wanted to do what was right, let the cost to her personal inclinations be what it might. And there was no one to tell her what the right course was. The Rector? She smiled at the idea of laying a point of conscience before Mr. Denvers, good man though he was. There was no one who could speak to her with that authority which alone can give a sense of security to a perplexed conscience.

So far as she could see, she was bound by her promise, unless her lover chose to release her; and as he steadily refused to do this, there was no help for her.

Meanwhile Paul had arrived at his destination.

Darnport was a small, old-fashioned seaport, which some years before had fallen into a state of stagnation, but now seemed to be in a fair way of recovery. The London and Devonshire Bank, of which Harold Kenyon was the local manager, fronted the market-place; and thither Shenstone directed his steps.

"Mr. Kenyon in?" he asked the cashier; and without waiting for an answer, he passed into the bank parlour.

"How d'ye do, Kenyon? I just looked in to see what my balance may be at present," he said.

Harold begged his visitor to sit down, touched a bell, and asked the clerk who answered it to bring him the required information.

"Almost run out, I see," said Shenstone carelessly, when the slip of paper was handed to him. "I may overdraw a little, I suppose?"

"Certainly, but we should want something in the nature of security, or——"

"Oh, I can't be plagued with all those forms. If you can't oblige me, I can easily get the money elsewhere."

"Or a guarantee signed by some one we know," continued Harold.

"You don't always insist on that, do you?" asked Paul sharply.

"Not in the case of old customers whose circumstances are well known to us; but you have not been long in this neighbourhood, so you can't expect to be indulged like an old inhabitant."

Kenyon spoke in a light, pleasant tone; but Shenstone did not seem mollified by his manner. He reddened angrily, as he replied:

"You have not been long in this neighbourhood yourself, if it comes to that, Mr. Kenyon."

"Perfectly true, Mr. Shenstone. And I assure you I meant nothing offensive by my remark. Only, you must see that a customer of forty or fifty years' standing may reasonably expect——"

"Oh, yes, I know!" cried Shenstone impatiently.

"Have you settled about the purchase of your house?" asked Harold.

"Eh? My house? Fir Croft? Yes. I am going to buy it. I want a trifle—two or three hundred would be enough—to make up the purchase-money."

"Then it can easily be arranged by depositing the deeds."

"And I want a little for my wedding tour. You may have heard that I am to be married on the twelfth of next month?"

"N—no. I had not heard. That is, I had not heard it was so near," stammered Kenyon, who had turned very pale.

The other looked at him curiously, and gave a little laugh as he returned: "Yes; I am to be turned off that day, it seems. Shall we see you at the ceremony?"

"I haven't been asked, so I don't suppose you will," said the young man shortly.

"Don't say that. *I* should be pleased to see you; and I'm sure I can speak for Miss Dale too. But about the money—I *may* want to overdraw, perhaps two hundred pounds. I suppose if I get any of my friends here to guarantee the amount—Croft, or Blenkinsop, or old Matthew Rogers—that will do, eh?"

"Any one of these names will be perfectly satisfactory," returned Kenyon.

"Very good. I'll go and look one of them up, and send you the guarantee by post. Good-day."

"Good-afternoon."

"Oh, by the way," said Shenstone, turning back when he had reached the door, and closing it behind him. "I suppose you have quite given up your idea of hunting up that fellow Vere?"

"Thou dost demand this sacrifice at my hands?"

Kenyon reddened angrily, and paused for a moment to control himself before he answered.

"Practically I have. I don't know where to look for him."

"But would it not be highly inconvenient for him if you *did* find him? You could not deliver him up to justice, at least it would be most painful, of course, to do that; and yet you could not wish to become an accessory to the murder by concealing him."

"I don't believe my friend did commit the murder!" cried Kenyon, striking the writing-table with his fist.

Shenstone stared at him for a few seconds without speaking.

Then he went up to Kenyon and held out his hand.

"Forgive me, Kenyon," he said. "I see I have wounded you; I assure you nothing was farther from my intention. It does you honour to cling to the belief in your friend's innocence. I wish I could do the same. I do, indeed."

Kenyon took the offered hand not very willingly.

"And all I ask is this," continued Shenstone, "if I can be of any service in discovering Vere's whereabouts, or in proving his innocence, will you let me know at once?"

"Thanks; I will," said Harold. "But I confess I have little hope of that. Sometimes I fear that the poor fellow has destroyed himself."

"That possibility has been in my mind for some time," said Paul gravely. "But should you hear any news of him

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you will let me know at once, and allow me to give you any help I can?"

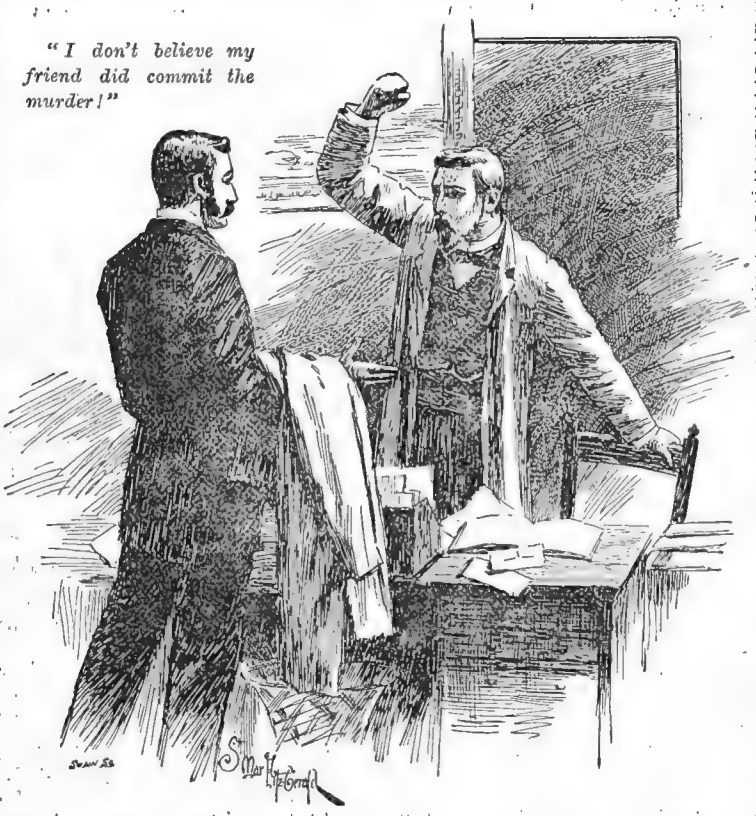
Kenyon promised that he would do so; and the two men parted.

CHAPTER XIII.

A First and Last Appeal.

It was impossible for Kenyon to do any more work that day. One hateful thought was continually in his mind; despair was at his heart. Kate's wedding day! It was fixed at last. So many suns would rise, so many evenings close, and then Kate would be beyond his reach for ever.

Without his knowing it, those last interviews between her and himself had had the effect of inflaming his love for her. He could not reason down his passion now, as he had done a few weeks before. It cried aloud, and would not be silenced. The idea of Katherine Dale's passing into Paul Shenstone's keeping, to become his, in three short weeks was maddening to him. He wondered how he had been able to keep calm, and disregard Shenstone's tone of mockery, his triumphant smile.



"I don't believe my friend did commit the murder!"

He could not rest, could not stay indoors. Flinging on his hat, he told the cashier that he would not be back that afternoon, and hurried out into the street.

The sky was black, and some heavy drops were falling; but Harold cared nothing for the weather. He walked on, as fast as he could, towards Wythecombe. Perhaps, without intending it, he naturally turned in the direction in which *her* home lay.

Before he had cleared the town, the roll of thunder fell on his ears. But he scarcely noticed it. His only thought was to walk on, anywhere, faster and yet faster, vainly seeking relief from the torture that was gnawing at his heart.

Suddenly there came a blinding flash, which seemed to strike the earth at his very feet, and with it a crash as if all the artillery in the world had united in one terrific discharge. Instinctively Harold leaped backwards, hardly knowing whether he had been struck or not. Then a deluge of water came down, and he looked round for shelter.

The only house in sight was a ruined cottage that stood by the wayside a quarter of a mile further on; and he remembered that there was no other house nearer than Darnport. So he ran on to the cottage, and reached it just as another thunderclap pealed from the clouds.

The doors and windows were gone, but that mattered little. He sprang inside, and turned immediately to look back on the storm that was raging in the valley.

"Mr. Kenyon!"

The voice he knew so well thrilled through every nerve in his body. He startled violently, and threw a wild glance back into the desolate room, almost as if he expected to see the ghostly apparition of the woman he loved.

Katherine had just risen from a log, on which she had been seated; she stepped forward and held out her hand. Harold took it without speaking.

"I took shelter here a few minutes ago," said the girl in her clear musical tones. "Aren't we fortunate in finding a roof to cover us? Just see how it pours."

Harold continued to look at her, but made no reply.

"That was a grand roar, was it not? And it followed so close upon the flash. That shows that the discharge took place close by, doesn't it?"

She seemed unconscious that her companion was still steadily gazing at her, not rudely, but as if he had not yet recovered from his surprise at meeting her in that deserted cottage. At length his gaze wandered from her face to the scene without, while Kate continued to make commonplace remarks in a light and cheerful tone. Harold began to wonder whether he could have mistaken her sentiments altogether; it never occurred to him that she was talking merely to cover his confusion.

But a one-sided conversation cannot go on for ever.

Katherine paused, wondering at her companion's persistent silence.

The rolling of the thunder, and the noise of rushing water and boisterous wind filled the ear. Then she heard Harold's voice, so low and hoarse that it startled her.

"Miss Dale, I have heard that you are to be married on the twelfth of next month. May I ask you a question? Is it—is it true?"

"Yes, it is true."

Neither looked at the other while the question was put and answered.

"I am sorry to hear it."

Kate gave a slight start. Kenyon's voice was so hard and stern.

"Why?" She regretted the word the moment she uttered it. She ought to have said something very different.

"Why?" echoed Kenyon. "Because I believe it is not for your advantage or your happiness to marry Paul Shenstone. I distrust him. He has a cold, hard nature. He will not, he cannot, make you happy. Oh, Kate, if you value your life's happiness, if you want to escape perpetual misery, do not marry a man whom you do not love. Do take time to think——"

"Stop! Stop! Mr Kenyon. I cannot listen to you! What right have you to say such things to me?"

"What right? The right of one who sees a fellow creature

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"Mr. Kenyon!"

slipping over a precipice, to warn him of his danger, and if possible pull him back! I know what I have said is most unconventional, highly improper, and all the rest of it. But when I think of the misery of a loveless marriage, the wretched make-believe of affection, the agony of the ever-returning thought that it might all have been so easily avoided—the sense that there is no escape, none while life lasts——"

"Mr. Kenyon, I will not endure this. I cannot bear it. I will run out into the rain."

But the words had hardly left her lips before he stood in the doorway, making escape impossible.

"All I implore of you is to delay a little," he said, "before taking the irrevocable step. Six or twelve months would make it plain whether your heart was——"

"Mr. Kenyon, again I tell you you are taking a most unwarrantable liberty. You are insulting me grossly. You——"

"I? I insult you?"

"You are insulting me, though you may not intend it. I am not acting without thought or deliberation."

"Miss Dale, only say that you *love* this man, and I will go away and not say another word."

"Again, I say, Mr. Kenyon, you are taking a most unwarrantable liberty. Is it kind or manly of you to keep me imprisoned here and force this conversation upon me?"

"Think Kate——" For the second time he had called her Kate that day, though he had never done so before. Neither of them noticed it.

"Think, you can *never* break the chain. Think how heavy it may be. Why be in such haste to rivet it round you?"

"I have thought of it. I have thought of it all!" cried Kate, weakly abandoning her former line of defence. "God help me, I cannot do otherwise. I *must* keep my pledged word."

"Then a betrothal is in your opinion as binding as a marriage?"

"No. An engagement may be broken for many good reasons; but merely changing one's mind is not one of them."

"Why not?"

"Because that would reduce a promise to marry to a sham, a nothing. If there were no faithful and honourable people in the world, no promises would be worth anything at all."

"But your life's happiness?"

"Was happiness, founded on dishonour, ever worth having?" asked Kate; and a melancholy smile stole over her features as she spoke.

"But you will delay a little? You will consult your friends?"

"No," said Kate gently. "My mind is fixed."

"And you would make us both miserable for ever sooner than——"

Kate blushed scarlet. Harold saw his blunder; but it was too late. He felt that he had lost the day.

"Mr Kenyon," said the girl in an authoritative tone, "you must not say one other word to me on this subject. You have said too much already. Think! If you had become engaged to a girl, and if, within a few weeks of the day fixed for the marriage, another man, an acquaintance of your own, should endeavour to persuade your *fiancée* to break off the match—how would you regard such conduct?"

Harold was silent, his eyes fixed gloomily on the ground.

"Let us forget this conversation," said Kate yet more gently, "and try to bear our burdens patiently. And now—the rain is nearly over—good-bye."

He fell on his knees, and covered his face with his hands, while a big tearless sob shook his breast. When he stretched out his hands to touch her dress as she passed him, they met the empty air.

She had gone. He could not see the look—a look of tender pity, of love, and of deep sadness with which she had bade him farewell. Nor could he guess at the pain that gnawed at her heart. For she was to be sacrificed upon what she believed to be the altar of duty. She was to be the victim.

It is always so. Unless the woman is one of those

"Good-bye."

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rare beings, a heartless coquette, she is the one who suffers.

* * * * *

Kenyon rose from his knees and went slowly back to Darnport. But he did not think it possible for him to remain in the neighbourhood of Wythecombe. Change of some sort he felt that he must have. That evening he made all the necessary preparations; and next day found him in London.

CHAPTER XIV.

Only a Scrap of Paper.

Kenyon went to London without any fixed purpose or intention. He longed to escape from the familiar surroundings of home, where at every turn his wound was chafed by some association or remembrance. He hardly reflected that he was neglecting his duty. When the thought of business did recur to him, it only gave rise to some half formed intention of asking Mr. Bonnington to grant him leave of absence, or, if that was impossible, to accept his resignation.

Yet the time hung heavily on his hands. He would wander about the streets for what seemed a long, long time, and then would pull out his watch, to find that an hour had scarcely flown.

One day he happened to pass an old-fashioned tavern, called the "Cock Pheasant," which he had once been in the habit of frequenting; and, rather because it was past his usual dinner time than from any desire to eat, he went in and sat down.

The hour for luncheon was long past, but the dinner hour (according to London ideas) had not nearly arrived; so that the dining-room was all but empty.

Harold took up a newspaper to pass away the time while his meal was being prepared; but he noticed that one of the waiters, a tall, stout, sandy-haired man, was regarding him from a little distance with a certain amount of interest.

The steak and potatoes were produced in due time, and as the waiter placed them before the solitary guest he said with a smile:

"Beg pardon, sir, but we don't see you as much as we used to do, do we, sir?"

It was pleasant to Harold in his lonely state to find that he was remembered by somebody, even if it were only a waiter; and he, too, smiled as he answered:

"I used to come here pretty often, I think."

"Yes, sir. With a gentl'man as is a hartist."

Harold looked up with a start, and he vividly remembered the days when he and Vere used to come to that very room and order their meal together. It seemed a long time ago.

"I live in the country now, a long way off," he remarked.

Harold got through his dinner, and called for his bill.

"That gentleman, sir, that used to dine here with you so frequent——" said the waiter as he pocketed the money.

"Yes; what about him?" asked Harold sharply. He expected to hear something that he would rather have remained ignorant of.

"He was dining here last week."

"Indeed? What day was it?"

"What day would it be? Tuesday, I should say. Yes, sir, it was Tuesday. But I was going to ask if you could give me the gentleman's address."

"What do you want that for?" cried Harold in surprise.

"It was this way, sir. The gentleman left his overcoat, seeing as he and his friend went away rather hurried, and I thought if I had his address I would take it round to him, as he might have forgot what he had done with it."

"Very true," answered Harold. "If you give me the coat I will leave it at the gentleman's rooms myself."

The waiter pocketed the five shillings Kenyon gave him, and in a few seconds returned with the coat.

The sight of it gave Harold a strange thrill. It reminded him so vividly of the man who had worn it.

Suddenly an idea occurred to him.

"You spoke of the gentleman who owns this coat coming here with a friend," he said. "Was his companion a lady?"

"A lady? No, sir. Certingly not. He was a gentleman, young, and rather stout."

"On Tuesday evening?" asked Harold incredulously.

"On Tuesday evening last, sir. I'll take my solemn affidavy. I remember the day because I went to a meeting in the Agricultural Hall that same evening."

"Odd, surely," thought Harold, "for a man who has eloped with a young woman to come here and dine with a friend of his own sex on the very evening of the elopement!"

"This gentleman you speak of, who was with my friend," said Harold slowly, "I should like very much to know who he could have been."

"I'll take my solemn affidavy."

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"He's not one of our regular customers," answered the waiter; "I don't rec'lect that I ever seen him 'ere before."

"Short, you said he was, and stout?"

"Exactly, sir."

"Had he a short, thick moustache of light-coloured hair, and small brown eyes?"

"I think he had, sir," said the waiter in a hesitating way. "I should say that was the gen'lman's description; but I would rather see him fust."

"Do you think you would know him again if you saw him?"

"I'm certain I would, sir—certain of it."

This was an important point; for the man whom Kenyon had tried to describe was Arthur Beaumont, the young lawyer who had told Kenyon that Vere had not kept his appointment with him on that Tuesday evening.

But Kenyon thought it better to say no more just then. He was anxious that the waiter should not learn Vere's name, and thus discover that his friend, the owner of the overcoat, and the man who, by the verdict of the Coroner's jury, stood charged with the murder of Jane Unwin, were one and the same man. And he was not sure that he would take any more steps to penetrate the mystery. For aught he knew, Vere's one chance of safety might lie in concealment.

If at any future time he wished to ascertain whether Beaumont had lied to him when he denied that he had seen Vere on that Tuesday evening, he might devise some way of bringing him and the waiter together. He therefore asked the waiter his name, and having ascertained that it was Forbes, he assured him again that he would carry the overcoat to the house of the gentleman it belonged to, and went away.

Carrying the overcoat over his arm, Kenyon resumed his solitary ramble. He went down to the Embankment, crossed Waterloo Bridge, and walked on, vaguely wondering where he should get to if he kept on in that direction for five or six miles. Then he retraced his steps, re-crossed the bridge, and turned towards the Abbey. From Westminster he went to Hyde Park, and so to Kensington, still without the ghost of an object, still utterly careless where he went or what became of him.

At length he felt tired, and accordingly he turned and made for his hotel.

When he reached it the head-porter came forward to relieve him of the overcoat which still hung over his arm. He had forgotten that he was carrying it about with him; and it was too late to take it to Vere's rooms that night. So he told the servant that he would take it to his bedroom, and carried it upstairs.

As he hung the coat up behind the door, it occurred to Kenyon that if he searched the pockets of it he might find some letter, or bill, or other document, which might afford a clue to Vere's intentions on the night of his disappearance, and might lead to his being found. A few days before Harold would have had the pockets turned inside out in five seconds; but now he hesitated, asking himself what possible good it would do to lay bare Vere's secrets, since he had abandoned the search for him.

After a time, however, curiosity prevailed over indifference. Harold approached the coat, and plunged his hand into one of the outside pockets. His fingers touched a bit of flimsy paper. He drew it out—a telegram. Doubtless the telegram which Martin, the railway guard, had told him Jane Unwin had dispatched from Exeter, the telegram bidding the infatuated man meet her at Paddington, on that fatal Tuesday evening.

Half mechanically his eyes ran along the pencilled lines.

His hands shook.

But when he reached the last word, he gave a hoarse shout, his eyes stared at the paper as if they were spell-bound; and his hands shook, so that the paper crackled.

This is what he read—

Must come up to London to-day. Am now en route. *Meet me Paddington six-thirty.*—Winifred.

(To be continued.)

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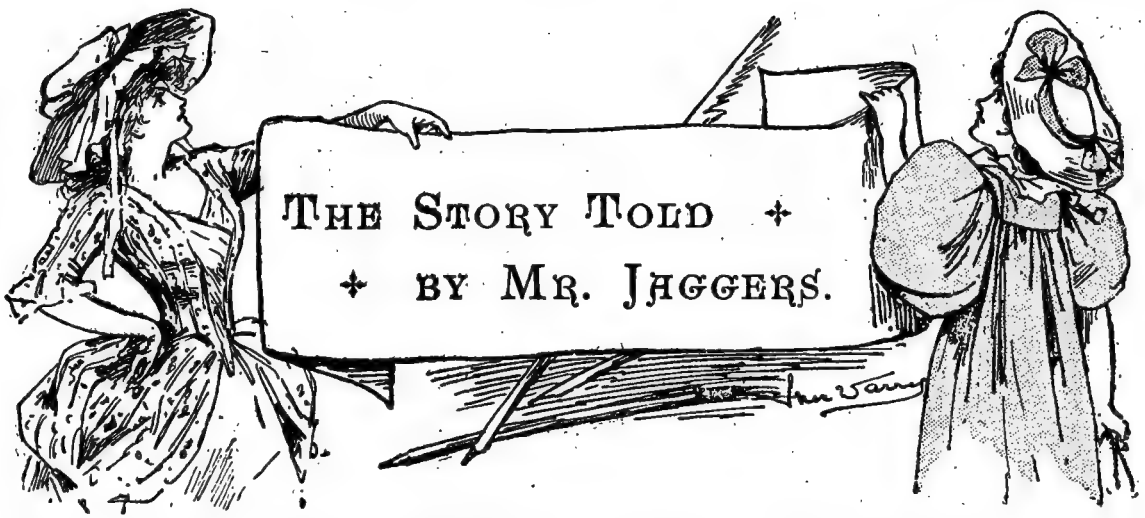

The Story Told by Mr. Jaggers.

Yes, my name's Jaggers—Signor Jager, the play-bills have it; and I'm the man that did it. And if you are particular about wanting to know the long and short of it, I'm hardened enough not to mind telling you, though I've never told the story straight out before, and, it is likely, never shall again.

"Terrible fatality!" the papers called it, and "shocking accident!" and all that. And so it was; and it was something more to me. A man does not find his life any lighter to bear when he has a stain of blood on his hands, and it's the blood, too, of the woman he——

But never mind that—that's over, like the rest of it.

She came to us in the early spring, nearly two years ago. I remember the time of the year well enough, and the night, too—a delicious, sweet-smelling, soft-blowing sort of a night, after a pretty heavy shower.

We had just come from a little town about twelve miles behind, and were going to give our first entertainment in the new place the next day. We had the tents ready, and the company had scattered themselves, as they always did when they had the time for a bit of a lark, for they were most of them young people, and given to that sort of thing. Fact is, I was the oldest performer among them, and I may as well own up that I wasn't a favourite, having the character of being a close, surly, sharp-tongued fellow, who didn't care to be sociable. And I dare say it was all true enough, it's a way of mine to like to be left alone, and people generally find it out.

So I was left alone that night, and was standing at the door of the big tent, looking up at the sky, and working out some notions of my own about the stars, when Leroy—that's the owner, you know—came up behind me, and touched me on the shoulder.

"Come in here, Jaggers," he says.

I turned half round, and saw he was smiling, as if something queer had happened.

"What's up?" I asked.

"Come into the back and see," said he. "I've got as fanciful a little fish there as ever you saw, and I want your opinion on her."

"Her?" said I.

"Yes," he answered. "A girl, as I'm a sinner!"

I did not care about girls, and I did not care about going, but I went, because it was easier to go than to refuse.

There was a kind of room at the back, curtained off from the rest of the tent. It was the owner's room—in fact, where all the business was done, and it was there Leroy led me.

"Come in," he said, lifting the curtain, "and prepare yourself for a sensation."

Now, I'm not a nervous fellow, or a susceptible one, and I was even cooler than usual that night, as I passed under the curtain; but I'll confess that when it fell behind me, and I saw her standing in the dim light, I gave a bit of a start.

She was not more than sixteen or seventeen, and she was dressed like any other little country lass just out of the hayfield or a dairy—short, coarse, blue petticoat, and print jacket, clumsy little shoes, and red handkerchief tied under her chin and over her curly hair—and yet I swear she was enough to make any man start at first sight of her.

If it was to come to comparing, I don't know anything I could compare her to but a rosebud, or perhaps a red-tipped daisy, just opened fresh to the morning sun and dew; she was so rosy, and dimpled, and pretty, and childish. That was it, you see; she was more a child than a woman, a lovely, pouting child, half frightened and half daring, and trying to look defiant from under her long, dark eyelashes, even while the hand holding her little bundle was trembling, as I saw.

"This is my friend, the illustrious Signor Jager, my dear," said Leroy in his joking way. "The gentleman you saw at Rossthorne, the only performer of the famous knife-trick in the world. Will you tell him why you came here?"

She gave me a shy little wilful look, and blushed and pouted more than ever, dropping her eyes the next minute, and working the toe of her stout little shoe into the sawdust.

"I ran away," she said at last.

"What for?" I asked, roughly enough. I had seen runaways before, and I knew faces like hers were better at home.

"I seen the show at Rossthorne," she answered, "and I want to be a lady, like them as acts, and rides the horses. I'm tired of farm work, and I won't stay at home no longer, and my aunt Jane needn't think I will. So I run away and came here, to see if I couldn't learn to be a actor."

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I turned, and I looked at Leroy, and he looked at me, hiding his laugh as well as he could.

"Well?" says he.

"It isn't well," I says. "She had better take her bundle and go back."

She heard me, and turned on me all in a pet, her soft, round, baby face reddening and quivering, big angry tears springing to her eyes.

"I won't go back!" she cried. "I won't go back—never—to be laughed at, and made game of. I'm going to be a lady. If you won't take me, someone else will. They've said many a time that—that my face was my fortune."

There was a childish triumph and certainty, even in the hesitant drop of her voice. Any simpleton could have seen that, little fool as she was, she knew her power as well as many a wiser and worldlier woman.

Leroy shrugged his shoulders, and spoke to me in an undertone.

"Shall I take her or not?" he asked.

"I won't have anything to do with it," I said.

"It is just such a face as we want," said he. "Her clodhopper friends were not far wrong in saying it was her fortune. People will come just to have a glimpse at her."

Then he spoke to her.

"What is your name?"

"Susy," she answered. "I won't tell the other one. You can call me anything you like. I don't want my real name on the bills if I stay; and it isn't a pretty one either."

"Susy?" said Leroy. "Well, Susy is a nice little name enough; but it won't do for a play-bill. Suppose we call you Mademoiselle Suzette."

Her eyes sparkled, and she laughed, like a child pleased with a new toy.

"Then you will take me?" she cried eagerly.

"Yes," said he. "I'll take you, and we will see if we can't do something grand for you, though you have to learn a good many things first. I'll take you, Mademoiselle Suzette, because your friends were in the right."

So it was agreed that she should stay. And, when he was at leisure, Leroy took her to the women's lodgings, and handed her over to the oldest of them, a good-natured creature, who had charge of the wardrobe, and sometimes took parts that did not need good looks.

Julia Mouncey her name was, and a nice laugh Julia Mouncey had the next day, when she told us how Mademoiselle Suzette had conducted herself in her new *rôle*. We were not a grand company, and if there were any jokes, they were sure to be passed from one to the other freely enough.

"Bless you!" said the jolly soul, "it was as good as a comedy to hear her talk, and see her stand there with her eyes shining like a six-year-old's, just going with wild joy over the old things I showed her—tinselly rags, that wouldn't knock down for sixpence at auction. But I think the girls rather upset her when they came in, all in their common clothes. She thought they wore gauze and tights from morning till night, and she asked me afterwards how it was that they didn't look red and white, and handsome, as they did when they were acting."

If they had not been a good-natured lot altogether, there would have been envy among them; but, as it was, they took to the girl as a good joke, and even made a sort of pet of her. She was not quick at learning things, and gave plenty of trouble. But first one would give her a lesson, and then another, until she knew enough to go on and be looked at, if nothing else.

She was almost crazy with excitement the first night this happened, and the mixture of fright and ecstasy made her so pretty, that she was a sight to see!

Leroy had built so much on her beauty, that he even commissioned Julia Mouncey to buy a couple of new costumes for her; and when she went in the first—a page's dress, that she had to dance a simple little dance in—you may believe it or not, but the whole house burst out into a roar of applause at the sight of her, even before she could make her bow and begin.

It was her childish look that did it, as well as her loveliness. She had no stage air and grace, and could only stand behind the footlights, trembling with joy and fear; her immense liquid eyes dilated, and her cheeks, blooming with colour, not knowing whether to run away, or stay where she was.

Leroy stood at the side, in quite a fever of delight.

"Let her keep that baby look," he said, "and her fortune's made. How the public like a pretty little fool!"

The audience called her back again and again, but Leroy knew better than to let her go more than twice, though she was eager enough, and would have gone half-a-dozen times after the first, if she had been allowed.

When I came up, to be ready for my turn, she was standing at the left wing, panting like a bird in her triumph.

She had pulled off her little purple velvet, pearl-banded cap, and held it into her hand, and her hair lay in soft, moist, golden rings on her forehead. She looked as fresh as a baby just out of the cradle, and she gave me one of her shy looks, from under her eyelashes, and laughed and pouted.

"They liked me, you see," she said, "though you did say I'd better go back with my bundle."

"I didn't say they wouldn't like you," I answered.

She tossed her little head, and looked down at her cap.

"Then why did you say I had better go home?"

"Because I meant it," I said, and pushed by her without further parley.

I was a born fool. I knew it then, and I knew it all along, from first to last. There was not one thing about her that ought to have held a man's fancy for a minute. She was a vain, empty-headed little animal, and nothing more. She was ignorant for lack of opportunity; she was selfish, and had no more heart than a kitten. She cared for no human being but herself, and asked for nothing better than plenty of food, and idleness and fine clothes, and admiration; and yet I fell into her net in spite of every better feeling that held me back.

If I had not given way myself, and, standing coolly aloof, had seen another man drift into such a mad fancy, how I should have jeered at him. And for that matter I jeered at myself, and struggled hard enough; but it was no use.

Perhaps, however, I was a bit wrong in saying she had no other attraction than her baby bloom, and her big, dark eyes. There was something else about her, though it would be hard to describe what it was. It was a way she had, which took with women as well as with men, and made them wait on her, and treat her like a child; a sort of simple, helpless, careless fashion of seeming to expect petting and sacrifice from everybody.

She never did anything for herself, or gave thought

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for the future. So long as to-day brought comfort and sunshine, she never troubled herself about to-morrow. She would curl up in a warm corner, and watch Julia Mouncey sew for her until midnight, and then would turn in and fall asleep with a smile on her lips, never seeming to have a doubt that her costumes would be ready for her, though her own little bungling fingers had not been trusted with the work for a minute.

"I'm glad I ran away," she would say. "I wish I'd done it sooner. I'm happy here. But I hate my Aunt Jane!"

"Though her Aunt Jane," said Julia Mouncey, afterwards, a trifle out of patience, "has been a mother to her, as I have found out from what her own lips have told me."

And yet it was this very pretty, selfish helplessness that fascinated us. A different face would have made it a different thing, but that face of hers made fools of one and all. Her very vanity helped her, too, since it caused her to be eager for admiration, and anxious to please people where it might be done without self-sacrifice. What was it but vanity that made her make advances in her pouting, whimsical way, even to me? Being the madman I was, how could I help watching her in secret at all times, and, standing at the wings when she went on to sing her little idle songs, and dance her simple dances, which were mere nothings, and yet always brought down the house, as if they had been something wonderful?

I had been watching her so one night, when the public were more than usually wild over her, and, as she came running off, she saw me, and stopped suddenly, hanging her curly head, and pouting out her red lips petulantly.

"What do you look at me for?" she demanded. "You don't like me. Why should you stand there always—when you hate me so?"

I set my back against the wings, and folded my arms grimly.

"Do I hate you?" I answered.

"Yes, you do," she said.

"Then all the better for me," said I.

Most girls would have been rebuffed, but it was not her way to feel things deeply. She opened her eyes full upon me in an innocent, surprised fashion, but without a hint of real anger in her expression.

"I haven't ever done nothing to vex you," she said.

"No," answered I.

"Other people like me," with a fresh pout.

"I dare say," said I.

It was only her vanity that was stung, but, as I have said, her vanity was all that ever was touched by anything. To see even an ugly fellow like me, cold and unresponsive, was enough to upset her a bit. The dimples about her mouth began to work, and her eyes grew big and moist all at once. She dropped her little cap, and stopped to pick it up, and when she raised her head there were pettish tears on her lashes.

"I don't care," she said. "Everyone else——" And there she broke off, and tried to run past me.

It sounds like a poor business enough when it is told; but I swear to you, I lost all power over myself. Before I knew what I was doing I had caught her by the arm, and was holding her fast.

"Let me go!" she cried. "I—I hate you!"

"It was me that hated you a minute ago," I said, almost savagely. "Look at me, and see if I hate you."

I made her turn round in spite of her efforts, and I think my look frightened her, for the next instant she hid her face in her little hands.

"Do I hate you?" said I.

"I—don't know," she panted. "No—no—you don't. I want to go. They are calling me."

"May I stand here and watch you every night?" I asked, and yet not gently, either. I was wild with myself, even while I said the words.

Then she drew her hands away, and gave me a look—half triumph, half terror.

"Yes," she whispered, "if you like."

"I do like," I said, "or I shouldn't do it." And then I let her go.

Only the next morning Leroy came to me with a piece of news.

"The Wallers are going to-morrow," he said. "And we shall be in a nice fix if we can't get someone to take Lotta's place. We can do without the other one well enough, but it is very awkward to lose Lotta."

He was right there. The public liked the knife-trick principally, I used to think, because it was such a dangerous bit of business, and made them hold their breath until it was over, and I made my bow to them. And it was a dangerous business, too; as dangerous as it looked, which is saying a good deal.

This was how it was done, though I dare say you have heard of it, if you haven't seen it.

The girl Lotta, dressed in a boy's fancy costume, stood against a kind of screen, at which I threw a number of large, sharp knives, all escaping her by a hair's-breadth, until she was literally pinned, or penned in with them. They pierced the screen above her outstretched arms, and under them, down her sides, and round her hands; and often as I had practised, and old as the trick was to me, I can tell you I never did it without an uncomfortable feeling, and a wish that it was over.

But, as I have said, the public liked it, and it was so rare, that we could not dispense with it, and it was true enough that we should be in a tight place if we could not find someone willing to run the risk, and cool enough to do it safely.

"There's no one who can do it," I said.

Leroy laughed a dubious, uncomfortable sort of laugh.

"Well," said he. "It seems not; but I have an idea, if we can manage her—and there's nothing more sure than that—she would take wonderfully."

"Who?" I asked sharply.

He laughed again and twisted his moustache.

"Mademoiselle Suzette," he answered. "You know what a sensation she always makes; and she isn't nervous. She's a cold-blooded little animal, though one would scarcely fancy so to look at her. And she would do anything for a new costume, and I've promised her the prettiest dress she likes to choose for herself."

"What?" cried I. "Have you spoken to her about it?"

"Yes," said he, shrugging his shoulders, "and though she was more than half-frightened at first, I am not sure but the idea of a new triumph pleased her. The costume was the bait, however. She would sell her soul for a spangled petticoat, and would scarcely lose by the bargain."

"Leave her alone," I said. "Her soul is none of our business."

There was a moment's pause, in which he looked at me as if he was waiting to hear what else I was going to say. Men understand each other well enough as a rule, and he understood me.

"I won't do it," I said at last.

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"You won't?"

"No," said I.

"Very well," said he, and walked away whistling.

He was sharp enough to know better than lose his temper, and argue the point. If he had done that, the end would only have been a row, and defeat for him; and, as I say, he knew better than to run any risk.

He managed the matter another way. He went and talked to Susy, and the consequence was that when next I saw her she was in a pet, and would scarcely look at me.

"What's the matter?" said I.

"Nothing," she answered, and looked crosser than ever.

In a minute, however, she took a new turn, as I knew she would.

"No one ever said they wouldn't act with me before," she broke out, tossing her head. "There's plenty as likes me well enough to wish they could."

"Who told you I wouldn't act with you?"

"Mr. Leroy." And then all at once she raised her eyes to mine.

"Why wouldn't you?" she asked.

"Because," said I, faltering like a fool, "because I wouldn't trust myself."

"I'd trust you," she said. "I'll trust myself with you—with you."

She had no more sentiment about the matter than Mouncey herself, but she blushed, a sudden lovely blush, and then tried to laugh it off in her foolish, pretty fashion.

"I wouldn't trust everybody," she added; "but I know you wouldn't trust me."

I had never known just how weak I was until then, when I found myself giving way to her, knowing it was madness.

"Do you want to take the place?" I asked her.

We were standing at the door of the tent, and she looked out at the blue sky far away, as if she saw Heaven, and nothing nearer.

"Leroy says I shall wear pink satin and black velvet and gold," she said. "And I do so like pink satin, when it's shaded with black velvet."

She made me feel rough and half-savage.

"Do you like it well enough to risk your life for it?" I said.

She gave me the usual pout, and a laugh like a bird's trill.

"You wouldn't hurt me," she answered. "Nobody would; but you less than anybody."

And that bit of daring, triumphant folly was harder on me than all the rest.

So, to make the story short, Leroy got his way, and I practised in secret for hours. I did not want everyone to know what an idiot I was, so I kept quiet, only telling Leroy that I would not try the trick in public until I had got used to the idea of doing it with a strange face before me.

It was even harder than I thought when it came to the point, and I had to practise with the child herself, shuddering at first at the whiz of the knives, and yet trying to laugh.

"Shut your eyes," I used to order her; "and keep them shut. I don't want to see them."

But, of course, we both got pretty well used to it in time. One thing is certain, she was the bolder of the two always, and at last could laugh and look her loveliest, from beginning to end of the business, and did not seem to care how long it lasted, if people only applauded; and many a little tiff we had, because I was so determined never to let any amount of clapping and calling make me go through it twice in a night.

I suppose I ought to know what I looked forward to in those days, but I must say I don't; I was oftener miserable than not, and always restless and ill at ease. She did not care for me, I know, nor for anybody else but herself for the matter of that, though she had more admirers than she could have counted on her fingers in half a day.

"I don't want to be married," she used to say to Mouncey. "I wouldn't be married," with a little shudder, "for anything in the world. I want to live this way always. Jennie Wyce, in Rossthorne, got married, and she used to have to nurse horrid little babies, and sew, and work. And she was pretty, too, once. I would rather die than live as she did. No one cared for her."

"Pooh!" said Mouncey, who was fond of joking her. "You must marry a lord."

"A lord!" she said eagerly, opening her eyes to their widest, as Mouncey told me afterwards. "Do lords ever marry girls like me?"

"I should think so," said Mouncey. "Read the penny novelettes, and see if they don't. They never marry anyone else. They like actresses the best, and flower-girls and milliners. I have read of one who took a little crossing-sweeper, broom and all, in preference to a beautiful young duchess with golden hair and a haughty way and a million a year, not to speak of the family diamonds."

"And," says the woman to me, when she told the joke, "she believed it, and coloured up her loveliest, and lay on the sofa thinking about it, with her eyes all in a shine. You mark my words, the innocent little fool will be on the look-out for a lord from this day forward."

There might have been a fate in it. It was not three days before Leroy came to me laughing.

"We are going up in the world, by Jove!" he said. "Ford tells me we had a live marquis among the audience last night, and he came to see Mademoiselle Suzette. Did you see that pale, handsome, long-legged fellow in the front row? That was he."

"He had better have stayed at home," I said savagely.

"I dare say," said Leroy, "for his own sake, as well as for Mademoiselle Suzette's. For my part, I should not care to be troubled with her, charming as she is."

That night, when I went to look at the audience, I found Mademoiselle Suzette peeping through a hole in the curtain, and when she heard me, she turned round, blushing like a frightened child.

"I was looking for the lord," she stammered. "I never saw a lord, and they say there is one in the audience. Do you know which one he is?"

"He's in the second row to-night," I answered, half sneering. "The third man—a swell, with lilies of the valley in his buttonhole. How do you like his looks? Different from the rest of us, isn't he?"

"Oh, yes!" she burst out, at her first glimpse of him. "He's handsome, and nice, and his clothes are so beautiful!"

"I wonder if he will like my singing," she said tremulously to me as she passed me. "I'm frightened." It was not her singing he had come to hear.

His cool, indifferent face brightened as soon as he caught sight of her, and he leant forward, not missing a gesture or expression, as she did her part. Sometimes he smiled a little, but oftener he simply watched her, as he might

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have watched a beautiful bird, and at the end of her song he detached the lilies of the valley from his coat and threw them lightly and deftly towards her, so that they fell at her feet.

She had never received such a tribute before. Ours were not swell performances, and the people who usually attended them thought more of getting their money's-worth than of paying compliments to actors. She came off with the flowers fastened in her bodice, and she was in a state of such ecstatic excitement that she ran by me without seeing me at all.

Well, the next night he was there again, and the next, and the next, and always, after the first time, he brought a bouquet with him, and threw it to her, and so it went on for a week. At the end of that time Mouncey came to me in a fret:

"It's time for you or Leroy to do something," she said.

"There's nothing to be done," I answered.

I hadn't been looking on without seeing things, but what right had I to interfere; I was wretched enough to be more than half mad.

"There was a ring in her bouquet last night," she went on, "and this morning she went out to meet him. Bessie Jones has written three notes for her already. I have found that out."

"Well," said I savagely, "stop it if you can."

"Don't be a fool," she replied. "It's not women who can stop women—women like her, at least. If Leroy can threaten her enough to frighten her, or if you give her a lecture—she is half afraid of you—she may be held in check until we go away from here; and then, if he does not follow her, she is safe enough. She would forget the Angel Gabriel a week after she lost sight of him."

"Leave her alone," I broke out. "You women have a spite against each other." But I knew I was giving way to wild folly, even as I spoke.

She only laughed, in a comfortable scorn of the implied accusation.

"What?" said she. "Am I young enough to be jealous? A woman whose pink and white days are as far behind as mine are, ought to have got over envy. Bless you, man, I'm nigh on to fifty, and as tough as you. Keep your temper, and don't be simple."

That night, after the great knife-trick, when the bouquet flew towards mademoiselle, a note fell out of it, and I picked it up and put it in my pocket. She coloured up furiously, but dared not speak until we left the stage, and then she turned on me, ruffled like an angry bird.

"Give me my letter!" she demanded.

I took it from my pocket, but held it fast.

"A nice fellow—my lord!" I said, trying to speak without raging. "A charming fellow!"

She stamped her little pink foot on the boards.

"Give me my letter!" she cried. "Quick, quick!"

"Why quick?" said I. "Is he waiting to know if you will come?"

She reddened to the very roots of her curly hair, in her pretty fury of impatience, and she struck her hands together.

"Give it me!" she said. "I will tell him. It is no business of yours. I hate you!"

And that was the truth, too. She would have hated the best friend she had if they had crossed her in the merest trifle of a whim. That was her way. And yet, while I knew this, I could not help feeling a horrible pang when she spoke the words. They seemed to drive me wild, after a manner.

"Do you know where you are going to?" I asked her.

"Do you think I shall tell you?" she answered.

"I don't mean that," I returned. "I mean, do you know that you are going to utter destruction—to wretchedness and despair?"

I might as well have talked to the wind. There was not a warning on earth that could have touched her ever so slightly. She broke into a shower of tears, but it was only because she was afraid of being kept from her lover, and because my interference irritated her.

"I want my letter!" she sobbed pettishly. "He—he will be gone!"

What seized hold of me I cannot tell. I seemed to burst into a rage of feeling, notwithstanding my better sense. I flung the note upon the floor, and staggered back against the rough wall, hiding my face in my hands. I must have been holding on to some hope before, without knowing it.

"Oh, Heaven!" I cried. "Why is it that you are not a good woman?"

I had not been in the habit of thinking about women, but just at that moment I seemed to be knocked down, all at once, with a sense of what my gloomy life might have been made, if she had had a pure, loving heart, and I might have won it. But she answered me like a spoiled child.

"I don't want to be what you call a good woman. I hate good women!" and stooping down she picked up her note, and was off like a flash.

Leroy was wiser than I was, however. We had been doing well enough, and making money since our arrival in the town; but in half-an-hour after this he came to me.

"We must leave here to-night."

"What?" I answered.

He produced his pocket-knife, and began to trim his nails composedly.

"I cannot afford to lose Mdlle. Suzette," he explained, in his coolest style. "And I don't intend to if it can be managed. I mean to checkmate my lord."

I understood clearly enough then, of course; but I made no comment.

"It is the only way," he went on. "I know the foolish girl. That business of the ring looks badly for us, and he has money enough to give her as much trumpery as she can stand up under. And he will do it. He is one of your indifferent, lavish kind."

It seemed nothing but natural that there should be some trouble with the girl when she was told the news. When she came in that night, she found Mouncey putting the last few things in the trunks, and, on hearing her explanation, the woman said she turned pale, and began to cry in an excited kind of way.

"I don't want to go," she said. "It's so sudden. What is it all for?"

"Business reasons of Leroy's," answered Mouncey. "What ails you?"

"Nothing; only—only I don't like to be worried so. Where are we going?"

"I don't know."

"I wasn't going to tell her," she added afterwards. "She was sharp enough, silly as she is, to slip out to him again, or, at least, to send him word."

She fretted and pouted all that night, and showed ill-humour through the whole of the journey, which Leroy had taken care should be a longer one than usual. Mouncey had a comfortless enough time with her; and when we reached our stopping-place, it was two days

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before she would take her usual place in the performance again.

"Says her head aches," said Mouncey. "And I dare say it does after all that temper."

"Pooh!" commented Leroy tolerantly. "Leave her alone. She will be eager enough to show herself in a day or so."

And so she was. Petulant as her humour was, she found it dull work playing the invalid, and the accounts the rest brought her of the enthusiasm of the audience stirred her vain little soul within her. On the fourth day her headache disappeared, and she was ready to appear.

"She's safe enough now," said Mouncey, in a week's time. "Safe until the next one comes on the boards. She has let my lord drift into the background, and is full of nothing but the blue satin and silver Leroy has half promised her for the knife-trick."

She even became as friendly as ever with me, and acted quite as if she had forgotten her anger. The fact was that the people admired her so much that she had quite enough to make her happy. And it was no wonder that they admired her, for she grew prettier every day; prettier in the rose on her cheeks, and the gold of her hair, and the softness of her dark, dewy eyes. There wasn't a man or woman living who could have looked at her for the first without being fairly startled by the sight of so much beauty.

But I may as well cut my story as short as possible.

Leroy gave her the new suit, and Mouncey made it for her—a page's costume of blue satin, slashed with silver, and ornamented with pearl tassels and fringe, dangling and swaying as she moved.

She came out of the dressing-room the first night she wore it, just before we were to do the knife-trick, ready to go on in all her bravery. Mouncey had dressed her, and I'll own it upset me a bit, right at the beginning, just to look at her—all gloss of satin, and glow of colour, her little head running over with short, soft, baby curls; a half-shy, half-triumphant pout on her lips, her eyes full of delight.

She saw me stand watching her, and she came and stopped before me.

"Is it as pretty as the pink?" she asked.

"Yes," I said.

"Is it—is it prettier?"

"Yes."

She laughed; a breath of a laugh, as if she was so pleased with herself that she could not help it, and then she stood pluming herself like a bird, turning her head over her shoulders, this way and that, and touching up her pearl fringes, and the white feather in her cap, and the studded belt at her tiny, lissom waist.

"I wish it was time for us to go on," she said. "I don't like to wait."

And those were the last words I ever heard her speak.

They called us almost the next instant, and on we went.

The very moment the audience caught sight of her, they broke loose. They clapped and shouted and stamped, they even waved their hats and rose in their seats, and for several minutes there seemed nothing but to let her stand there bowing and dimpling, their eyes feasting on her.

But, of course, it stopped at last, and we took our places, she in her usual position against the screen, and I myself at the other end of the stage. It isn't easy to tell, you may be sure—that's what shortens my breath, and makes me break down here and there.

I threw straight enough for a while, straight enough and cool enough. My hand was as steady as it had ever been, until near the end.

It was the last knife I was going to throw—the very last—and she moved! I swear she moved!

She turned her eyes towards something in the audience, not far from us—someone who had just come in, and somehow she drew my eyes with her, and I saw too. I saw him—her lover himself—sitting a few feet beyond the stage, watching us; watching her as he had always done, with a light, cool smile upon his fair face.

It was the last knife, and I held it balanced in my hand; and I threw it, and it struck!

And there was a strange, sharp cry, and her little hands were tossed up wildly in the air, and she fell!

Good heavens! do you think any man could ever picture the least thrill of the madness that fell upon me?

There was a roar of voices, and a rush, and a kind of horrible shriek among the people; and some mounted their seats and denounced me in their first tempest of excitement; and some climbed the stage, and those who were behind ran on, and the women wrung their hands and sobbed in hysterical fright, and the men crowded round; and the first among all was her lover, who came near but did not speak, only stood by, with a white face, trying to hold still the shaking hand which held a crushed bouquet of lilies of the valley.

I had caught her almost as she fell, and I held her crushed against my breast, almost as he held the flowers, but my hand was red with the little stream which trickled from the triangular mark upon the side of her white temple.

The medical man who was brought in only bent over her a moment, and then stood upright.

"Dead!" he said. "Penetrated the brain. Stand back, you men, and let them carry her away!"

And they took her away from me, and left me empty-handed and panting. And all the crowd fell away and stared at me as if I had been a strange wild animal loose among them.

I don't know what I thought of, or if I thought at all, I don't remember. I know I turned from right to left, and shook as if an ague had seized me, and then my eye caught a glimpse of one man again, and my blood seemed to rush and boil in my veins.

"You fiend!" I shouted. "You fiend—it was you—it was you—it was you!" And I sprang at his throat and clutched him, and so seemed to fall into black darkness.

That is how it was, and that is all. She was dead, and I had killed her. "Accidental death!" the jury brought it in, with a censure upon the dangerous nature of my performance. And there were plenty who were sorry for me, and who were kind to me during my illness. It was worse for me than for her, some said. A pretty, innocent creature like that, they always added, "so pretty, and innocent, and young!" But, as I say to my self often, there is only one thing for me to remember, and I am not the man to forget it. She is dead, and the hand which struck her deathblow was mine—MINE!

Reginald Baird.

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RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

No. 4.

Although a large number of competitors entered for this competition, no one succeeded in solving all the problems. Mr. W. B. Early, 12, Willow Walk, Sydenham, solved 9¾, and Miss Elsie Daw, 6, Edith Road, St. Catherine's Park, S.E., solved 8½, to each of whom a guinea has been sent. Pencil-cases have been forwarded to the competitors whose names and addresses appear below, all of whom have solved over six problems out of the ten:

A. Trivess, 4, Graham Road, Southsea, Hants.
J. Moir, Blackhall, Pitmuxton, Aberdeen.
J. Trail Hill, 3, Merchant Street, Peterhead.
J. M. Ruddock, 2, Holt Hill Terrace, Birkenhead.
Mrs. M. E. Mennie, 99, Queen Street, Peterhead.
W. Almond, Mauldeth, Heaton Mersey, Manchester.
J. Read, 1, Florence Villas, Cavendish Road, Merton.
J. Gillispie, 105, St. Michael Street, Dumfries.
Mrs. A. Sellurs, 69, Clinton Road, Mile End Road.
B. H. Monnickendam, 175, Gloucester Road, Regent's Park.
C. B. Keston, 11, Queen's Road, Bayswater.
B. Crane, 183, Hollydale Road, Nunhead.
Miss M. Bennett, Steyne School, Worthing, Sussex.
W. Deeble, 25, Arwenach Street, Falmouth.
Miss E. Champs, 16, Prospect Hill, Walthamstow.
F. Bessant, 15, Eaton Place, Falmouth.
Miss M. Crockwell, The Convent, Adelphi House, Salford.
G. Russell, 68, Strahan Road, Bow.
A. James, Gorringe Park, Mitcham, Surrey.
W. C. Eyton, 80, Broad Street, Hanley, Staffs.
Mrs. Morrison, 31, Alexandra Road, Wimbledon.
W. S. Cool, 28, Thirsk Road, Lavender Hill.
T. H. Tripney, 50, Coniger Road, Fulham.
Miss B. Wood, Bower Lodge, Pyrland Road, Richmond.
W. Buchan, 9, Romford, Road, Stratford.
G. D. Taylor, 28, Ernest Street, Rhyl, North Wales.
W. Dawson, 23, Hewitt Street, Highton, Manchester.
J. H. Kidd, Mauldeth, Heaton Mersey, near Manchester.
Miss May, Curraghmore, Shanklin, Isle of Wight.
A. Whitworth, Manston, Mason's Avenue, Croydon.

KEY OF NO. 4 COMPETITION.

Key No. 31.

Mushroom.

Key No. 32.

Cone, ceil, cab, cable, one, once, co, cob, coca, coil, cove, coal, conceive, con, cole, coble, conceal, coeval, ob, on, ova, oval, oil, oca, nib, Nile, nil, neb, nab, eve, vale, able, ale, be, Eva, ab.

Key No. 33.

(a)
G OIN G.
A COR N.
B ABB I.
G ROW L.

(b)
G RAMPU S.
R ONDEA U.
A GITAT O.
M ACARON I.
I NAUGURA L.
N UNCI O.
I NTERLEA F.

Key No. 34.

1. Grim—y.
2. Thin—e.
3. O—s.
4. Olive—t.

Key No. 35.

£1 19s. 4$\frac{11}{11}$d.

Key No. 36.

MELODY.

Key No. 37.

a=b. e=f. i=j. o=p. u=v.

There is considerably less trouble in arranging a cypher sentence than there is in finding a solution to it.

Key No. 38.

Pearson's Weekly Cricket Club.
Dr. Jameson's Raid.
Home Notes, the ladies' favourite.

Key No. 39.

And he left with this one letter in his leather pouch, walking more quickly, for he had already been delayed too long, and the letter ought to be forwarded on by the first courier if it was to reach its destination early the next day.

Key No. 40.

Fjndjng. Value 147.

KEY OF NO. 3 COMPETITION.

RESULT PUBLISHED LAST WEEK.

Key No. 21.—$\frac{11}{11}$ths.

Key No. 22.

(1) 102 illustrations (2) 38 photographs.

Key No. 23.

"Heroes eventually find an opportunity for displaying their heroism."

Key No. 24.

G R A N T.
R A C E R.
A C A R A.
N E R V Y.
T R A Y S.

Key No. 25.

(a) 320. (b) £1 6s. 8d.

Key No. 26.

Gas.
Yet.
Mid.
Not.
Auf.
Son.
Ton.
Ion.
Cod.
Sod.

Key No. 27.

Mag—net—o—meter. Magnetometer.

Key No. 28.

(1) "Wisdom Let Loose." (2) "The Fresh Air Fund." (3) "The Liar."

Key No. 29.

The, he, 36 times.	What, hat, 2 times.	Chatter, hatter.
Brain, rain, 2 times.	That, hat.	Gas, as.
Will, ill, 6 times.	Many, man.	Hat, at.
Those, hose, 2 times.	There, here.	Fred, red.
One, on, 3 times.	Placed, laced.	Away, way.
Number, umber, 5 times.	Dashes, ashes.	Tail, ail.
Awarded, warded.	Whole, hole, 3 times.	First, firs.
Write, rite.	This, his, 2 times.	Turn, urn.
Simply, imply.	Her, he, 2 times.	With, wit.
Page, age, 3 times.	Their, heir, 2 times.	Done, one.
Cover, over.	Stories, tories, 2 times.	Ever, eve.
For, or, 3 times.	Year, ear, 2 times.	Marks, arks.
Mark, mar.	Measurer, measure.	Any, an.
Tour, our.	Changed, hanged.	Lumber, umber.
Glass, lass.	Form, for.	Son, so.
When, hen, 4 times.	Male, ale.	And, an, 3 times.

Key No. 30.

"Let us have done with such expeditions for ever, and turn our attention to urging upon our undesirable neighbours the advantages of emigration to the most unhealthy regions of Africa."

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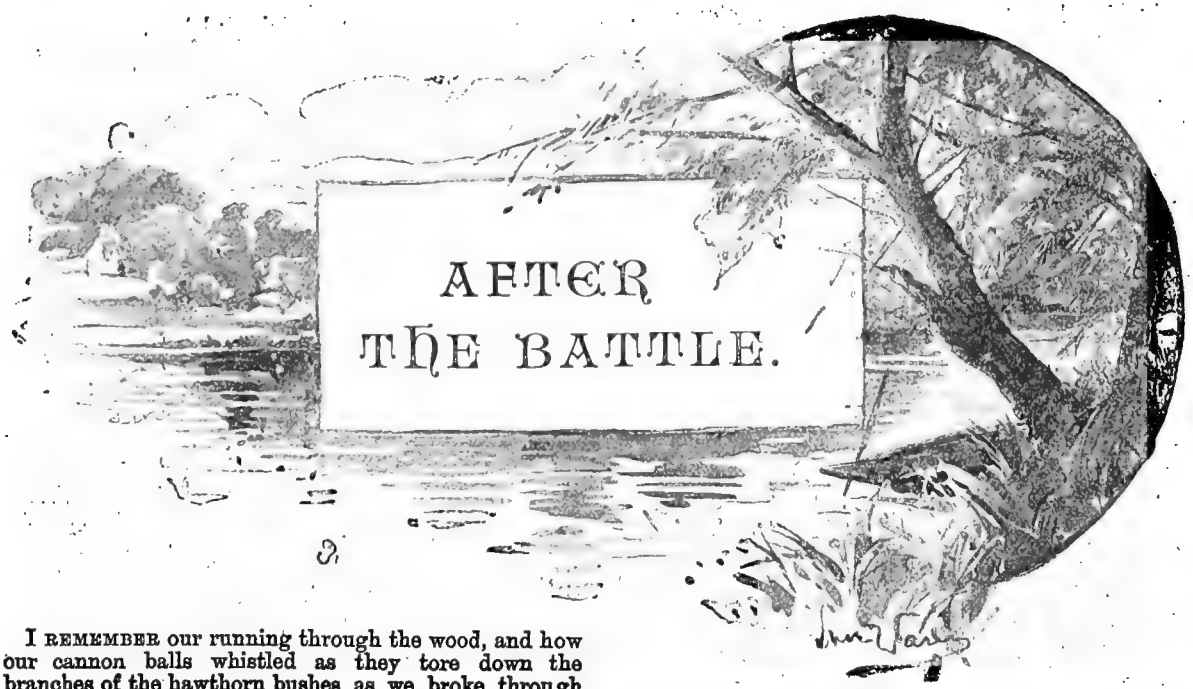

I remember our running through the wood, and how our cannon balls whistled as they tore down the branches of the hawthorn bushes as we broke through them. Beyond the border of the forest we could see something red flashing here and there. Sidoroff, a young soldier from the first battalion, suddenly fell to the ground, and silently looked at me with big, frightened eyes. Yes, I remember it very well.

I also remember the Turk, I noticed when we reached the clearing. He was tall and stout, and I was short and thin. I ran straight towards him. Something snapped. Something huge, as it seemed to me, flew past me. I heard it whistle. "He has shot at me," I thought. But he, with a wail of pain, leant against the hawthorn bush. With a blow I knocked the musket out of his hands. I heard him moan, and then I rushed on.

Our men cried: "Hurrah!" Some fell. Some gave fire. When I had left the wood, I also fired several times right on the plain. Suddenly the "hurrah!" grew louder, and we all rushed on—that is, not we, but our men, for I remained. This seemed strange to me, and yet more strange, that everything had disappeared and the noise had stopped. I heard nothing, but I saw a bit of blue colour before me, very likely the sky. After awhile this also had vanished.

I was never in such a funny state before. I am lying, it seems, on my stomach, and I see before me a bit of ground. A few grasses, little broken pieces of last year's herbs, and some ants crawling over them—this is all my world. And all this I see with but one eye; the other is closed with something hard—perhaps a branch on which my head rests. I feel very uncomfortable, and I want to move, but I do not understand why I am not able to. Time passes. I hear the noise of the grasshopper, the buzzing of the bee. At last I made an effort to free my right hand from under my body, and leaning with both hands on the ground I try to stand on my knee. Something sharp and quick as lightning passes through my body, and once more I fall. Once more darkness and nothingness.

I awake. How is it that I now see the stars shining brightly on the dark blue Bulgarian sky? Am I not in my tent? Why am I not there? I try to move, but I feel a torturing pain in my leg. Yes, I have been wounded in the battle. Dangerously? I touch my leg where I feel the pain. Both legs are covered with blood. When I touch them, the pain grows stronger. There is a noise in my ears, and my head is heavy. In a confused way I understand that I am hurt in both legs.

How did it happen? Why did they not pick me up? Is it possible that the Turks have beaten us? I try to remember what has happened to me, first in a confused manner and afterwards more clearly. I remember now that we were not beaten at all but that we began to run and that I had to drop down on the plain near the hill. Our commander had pointed to the plain: "Boys, we shall be there," he had called out. And we were there; that proves that we are not beaten. But why did they leave me? This is an open place where they could have seen me. They fired so often, very likely I am not alone. I must turn my head and see. I can do it so easily as this time I had fallen on my back—this accounts for my seeing the stars instead of the ground.

I raise myself into a sitting position, but this is hard work when both legs are wounded. Several times I have to rest, and the pain brings tears into my eyes. At last I sit up. Above me are the dark blue sky and the twinkling stars; around me seems something dark and high. My hair stands on end. I have fallen into the bushes and they have not found me. But how did I get here, when they shot at me on the plain? Very likely, driven by pain, I had rushed on. Strange? Now I am not able to move, and then I could run so far.

The big stars have grown paler and the little ones have disappeared; the moon is rising. How good to be at home! I hear strange sounds. It seems that, after all, there is somebody. Yes, that was a groan. Is there somebody near me, also forgotten, with wounded legs or a ball in his stomach? No, the groans are too near, for

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there is nobody so close to me. Good heavens, it is myself! Slow, plaintive groans! Am I really so bad? Very likely. But I hardly realise the pain, because there is a mist in my head, it feels like lead. I had better lie down and sleep. Sleep? Shall I ever wake up again? I hardly care.

Suddenly a broad streak of moonlight illuminates the place where I am about to lie down, and I see something dark and big lying at a few steps from me. Something on it glistens in the light of the moon. I recognise a brass button. Very likely a dead body or a wounded man. All the same to me, I lie down.

No, it cannot be! Our men have not left the field. They have beaten the Turks and have remained in this position. But why do I not hear the sound of voices or the crackling of fire? But then I am so weak that I am not able to strain my ears. Surely they are here.

"Help, help!" I call out.

Wild, hoarse sounds burst from my chest. They remain unanswered. All is silent around me. The moon has a mournful expression on her round face. I remember the bright buttons. "If he were alive, he would have heard my call. He is dead. Is he ours or a Turk? Oh, God, if it were not, all the same!" And sleep closes my weary eyes.

I am lying with shut eyes, although I awoke long ago. Through the thick branches of the hawthorn I feel the heat of the sun, and I do not care to open them. It is better not to move at all. Yesterday—was it yesterday?—I was wounded. One day has passed, others will pass, and I shall die. How good it would be not to think, but this is impossible. Thoughts and remembrances come to my mind, and besides, it will soon be over. They will publish that our losses were of no consequence. "Wounded, so many; killed, Ivanoff, a private from the volunteers." Perhaps they will not put the name. Simply: "Killed, one." A private! as if they would say "a dog."

It was long ago. All my life—that is, the life when I was not lying here—seems so long ago. I walked in the street, where I saw a crowd of people looking at something white, covered with blood. It was a pretty little dog, which had been killed by the tramcar. A man came and carried it away.

Will they carry me away, too? Or shall I remain here to die? How sweet life seems to me! When I saw the little dog that day, I had felt happy. Remembrance, why do you torture me? The past is happiness; the present misery. Home-sickness, thou art worse than all the wounds!

It is growing warm, the sun is burning. I open my eyes and I see the same bushes, the same sky, but in broad daylight. And there is my neighbour. Yes, it is a dead Turk. What a giant! I remember him; he is the man I killed. Why did I kill him? Why did he come here? Who is he? Like myself, he may have an old mother looking out for him. And I? And I also. Yes, I should like to change with him. He does not hear; he does not feel the pain of his wounds, anguish or thirst. The bayonet pierced his heart right through.

There is a great black hole in his uniform. This was done by me. I did not want to do it. I did not wish to harm anybody when I went to the war. I did not expect to kill people. I had thought more of exposing my own breast to the enemy's balls. And then? Fool, fool! And this wretched fellah (he wears the Egyptian uniform), his fault it was still less. He had never heard of Russia or Bulgaria. He was told to go, and he went. We attacked, he defended himself. Where is his fault, and why did I kill him? Why does thirst torture me? Who knows what that means? Even when we march through Roumelia, under a glaring tropical sun, I did not feel the thirst as I feel it now. Oh, if someone would but come!

Great Heavens! In his flask there may still be some water, but how to reach it? It will cost me agonies, but I must try. I begin to crawl. My feet drag. My weakened hands are hardly able to move the lifeless body. There are but a few steps to the dead body, but for me the distance seems endless. I must. My throat is parched and burns like fire. I should die soon without water, but I go on. Every movement is agony. I scream—I scream with sobs. At last I reach the flask. There is water enough to last me till I die. He whom I have killed saves me now.

I try to open the flask, but the effort is too great. I lose balance and fall right on the body of the dead Turk. I could smell the odour of decay. I took a long draught. The water was warm, but fresh, and would last me several days. I had read somewhere that a man could live a week without food if he had water. What if I lived several days longer? Our men are gone, the Bulgarians dispersed. There are no roads. Die I must, but instead of three days' suffering I shall suffer a week. Perhaps it would be better to end directly.

Near my neighbour lies his gun. I have but to stretch out my arm. One moment and all is finished. Shall I do it, or shall I wait? Deliverance or death? No, I shall have courage. I shall struggle on to the last. If they find me, I am saved. Perhaps my bones are not touched, and then they will cure me. I shall once more see my home, mother and Mary.

Oh, Lord, never let them know the truth! Let them think I was killed at once.

I am beginning to feel dizzy. My visit to my neighbour has entirely exhausted me. He is growing black and beginning to decay. What will become of him later? I can hardly bear the odour, and I am not able to move. The sun scorches my face and my hands. Nothing to cover me. If night would but come! This will be the second, I think.

My thoughts are growing confused.

I must have slept long for when I awoke it was night. My condition is the same. My wounds hurt. My neighbour, huge and lifeless, is still there.

I cannot help thinking of him. Is it possible that I have left all that is dear and precious to me, that I have come thousands of versts, have starved and frozen, and been tormented by heat and thirst, and am now lying here in agony only in order to kill this miserable Turk? Did I accomplish anything else besides this murder?

Murder—murderer! And who? I!

When I longed to join the army, my mother and sister did not keep me back, although they grieved deeply. I was sorry for them, but, blinded, I refused to see their tears. I did not understand how much I hurt them. Now I do.

If I could but bring back the past! How strange my conduct seemed to our friends.

"Madman, you do not know what you are doing!" they had said. How could they talk like this when our country was in question? Where was the love and patriotism they were constantly extolling? When I aimed at all these lauded virtues, why did they call me madman? I went with thousands of others, some of them like myself, as volunteers. A sharp morning

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wind stirring the bushes reminds me that this is my third day of suffering. The third! How many more? I am too weak to move away from the dead body. We shall soon be equals. I am thirsty. I shall drink three times a day, morning, noon and night.

The sun has risen. Its great circle, crossed and divided by the bows of the hawthorn, is red as blood. It will surely be warm to-day. My neighbour—what will become of him? He is terrible now. His hair is beginning to fall off; his dark, Egyptian skin has become yellow. What will the sun do with him to-day? To lie near him is impossible. I must move farther, however I shall have to suffer for it. I must, if it should take me hours to make a step.

The whole morning passes in the effort. The pain is terrible, but what is that to me? I have forgotten how it is to feel well. I have succeeded in reaching the old place, but even here I have the terrible odour of the decaying body, carried to and fro by the wind. It makes me sick. My empty stomach is shrinking. I am beginning to feel spasms. My whole interior turns with the terrible odour, which does not leave me for a moment. I have reached despair, and I weep—weep like an infant. Exhausted, all torn by the thorns of the bush, I feel almost unconscious.

Suddenly—is this a mistake—I hear talking and the stamping of hoofs I was going to scream, but refrained. If these should be the Turks! Then, to my own suffering, others still greater would be added. I have heard and read how the Turks tear off the skin and burn the wounds. Nothing worse than brutish men! Will it be better to end life in the hands of the Turks or here? But if they should be our men? Oh, these bushes! Why are they so thick? I can hardly see through them! There is one little place like a window which enables me to see in the distance. There seems to be the little brook where we quenched our thirst in the battle, and there is the big stone which was our bridge across the brook. They will surely come this way!

My hearing has grown so weak that I cannot distinguish the language which they talk. Lord! if they should be ours! I shall call out! They will hear me from the brook. Why does it take them so long? Impatience tortures me. I do not even notice the odour, although it is increasing, and suddenly Cossacks appear on the other side of the brook. The blue coats, with red stripes on the trousers, the Lancers, a whole battalion! In front, on a beautiful horse, the dark officer. As soon as they had reached the brook he suddenly commanded:

"Turn—march!"

"For heaven's sake, stop! Help! Help!" I scream, but the stamping of the hoofs and the general noise drown my rattling cries, and I am not heard. Oh, God, in my helplessness I fell with my face to the ground and I sob. From the overturned flask flows the water—my life, my salvation from death. After this I lost consciousness, and must have lain for many hours in this state, till at last a gust of wind blowing the terrible odour over me brought me to my senses. I looked at my neighbour. He had changed beyond expression. The first look at him nearly frightened me to death. I began to shiver when I looked at the skeleton in the uniform with the bright buttons. "This is war," I thought; "the representation of it!"

Once more the burning sun scorches my face and hands and causes me to feel thirsty. Not a drop of water is left in the flask. Why did I not scream louder? The Cossacks might have heard me. Even the Turks would be better than these pangs. Mother, darling mother! You would tear your hair if you knew. Good-bye, mother, sister—all!

Once more the little white dog. Why did I come here? To-morrow is the fourth day. How many more? Death, where art thou? Come and take me.

But death does not come. I have still to live and suffer. I am here under the burning sun, without a drop of water, and the nearness of the dead body is poisoning me. The worms have nearly finished him, and then they will be ready for me. The day passes and the night. The same thing. Another morning and another night.

There is a stir in the branches, and a noise as if they were talking. "You will die, die, die!" they whisper. "Never see again!" answer the bushes from the other side.

"From here you can see them!" says a loud voice near me.

I start and gain consciousness at once. Through the bushes I can see the kind, blue eyes of Iakoyley, our corporal, looking at me.

"Shovels!" he cried. "Here are two more, ours and theirs."

"No shovels! I don't need to be buried! I am alive!" I want to call out, but my throat is parched, and the closed lips are unable to utter a sound.

"Heavens! He is alive! Mr. Ivanoff. Boys, come here! Our young carine (master) is alive. Quickly call the doctor!"

Although one of my legs had to be operated upon, I have lived to tell and write of the terrible days I passed on the field of war.

LE VIER.

"The Willow Song," from MELODY.

THE BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

No. 7.

Two Prizes of £1 1s. Each.

BELOW will be found the seventh batch of ten problems in the new series of "THE BRAIN GYMNASIUM." Two prizes of a guinea each is offered weekly to those competitors who answer correctly the greatest number of these problems. Consolation prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor.

RULES:

1. All solutions to be written on one sheet of paper.
2. Don't write the questions. Simply put the numbers and the answer against each.
3. Each set to contain the £100 coupon (found on second page of cover) for the current week.
4. All attempts to be in by Monday, June 22nd.
5. Mark your envelope "Gymnasium, Number 7."

(61.) The initials of the words defined below, when placed one on the other, form a word signifying "very fine."

Rhymes with "muff."
Rhymes with "wonder."
Rhymes with "nestle."
Rhymes with "clever."
Rhymes with "vane."
Rhymes with "cool."
Rhymes with "pink."
Rhymes with "hot."
Rhymes with "peel."

(62.) The verse given below is jumbled up in the following manner:

The letters of each word and the words of each line are transposed; each word and each line, however, is complete in itself.

Het rones osner noser oth eth fitalubeu
Morf lorof het ot gelinic lifigln sentcame
Rove het techs duner het ponteuancer
Yint her adeh morf tinyad teef reh ot.

(63.) The words defined below when placed one on the other read both across and downwards the same:

1. A part of the body.
2. Formerly.
3. Cooling dainties.
4. A resort.

(64.) The following sentence is written in cypher. Transcribe it.

Brfmthfu thfrf m mmn wlth snsa sn dfmd whn tn hlmsfaf hmth nnt smld "L dn fnjny rfmdlng *Shnrt Stnrlfs.*"

(65.) A pianist commences at 10 a.m. on Monday, June 29th, 1896, to play the piano from 10 to 2 and 3 to 7 every day, and depresses the keys at the rate of 360 a minute. Another pianist commences at 47 minutes past 12 p.m., on the same day, and strikes the keys at the rate of 384 a minute. At what time on what day will the second player have struck a number of keys equal to that struck by the first player?

(66.) The initials and finals of the words defined below, read downwards and upwards, represent a word signifying "with many teeth."

1. To lessen.
2. Not reserved.
3. A South American quadruped.
4. A fish.
5. Want of religion.
6. Quarrel.

(67.) CHARADE.

My first is a parentless child.
My second an expression of surprise.
My third an evidence of victory.
My whole a commendable institution.

(68.) Let A=£1 2s. 7½d.; e=£2 0s. 1½d.; i=2s. 10d.; o=1s. 3½d.; u=£3 17s. 9½d. What word in the first column on this page has the greatest money value, and what is that value? State the position of the word.

(69.) Make an anagram from the sentence:
AFTER THE BATTLE.

70.) How many times is the word PEARSON'S quoted in the June number of *Pearson's Magazine*, including the advertisement pages and cover?

PICTURE ✣ PUZZLE ✣ PRIZE.

No. 8.

£10 TO BE GIVEN AWAY.

On the opposite page is a puzzle picture composed of 88 squares. If these squares be rearranged in a certain order they will form a real picture.

We offer a prize of £10 for the correct solution. In order to give readers in all parts of the United Kingdom as equal a chance as possible, none of the solutions received will be opened until Thursday, June 18th, when all those received will be considered together. In the event of two or more correct solutions being included up to this time, the prize will either be given to the sender of the *neatest* one, or will be divided amongst the correct competitors at the discretion of the Editor. Consolation Prizes will also be awarded.

If no correct solution be received on or before Tuesday, June 23rd, 1896, the Ten-Pound Prize will be given to the sender of the solution then to hand which is most nearly correct.

Pictures should be packed flat or folded, not rolled, and the outside wrapper must be marked "Puzzle Number 8."

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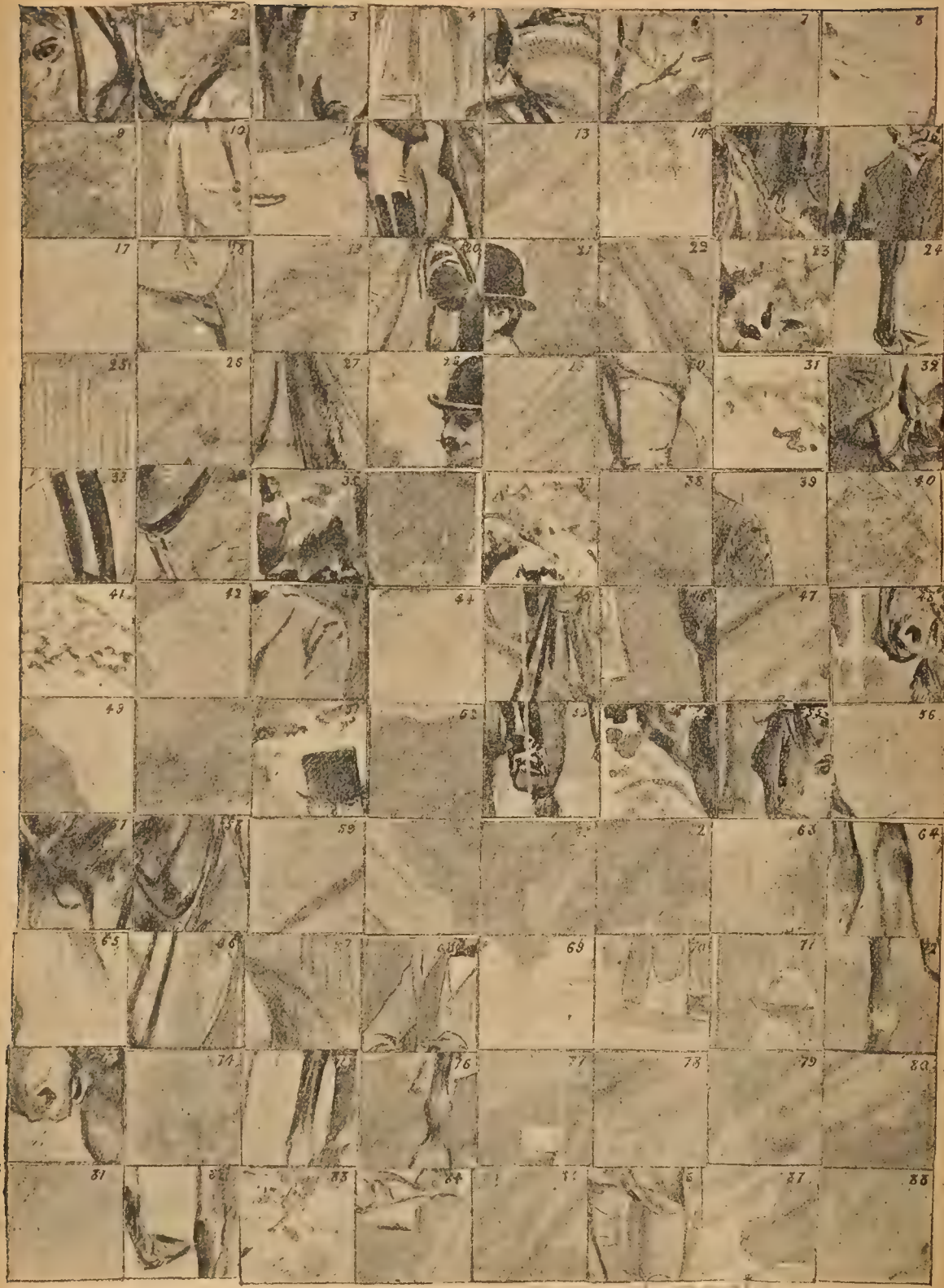
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A MODERN SATURNALIA.

A Story of the Moscow Tragedy.

"It has been like a scene in a fairy tale," sighed Lady Zoë, clasping her little white hands. "I shall never forget this, my first visit to Moscow!"

She spoke to a fair-haired boy of eighteen, slender in form, yet strong of feature.

He had the brow of a statesman, so his mother declared. He would live to be as great as his father, the celebrated Hamilton de Falbe.

"Yes," he replied, gazing at the lovely Lady Zoë. "One does not find oneself in a charmed city every spring; you do not see a coronation every day!"

The girl smiled.

"No, indeed. London is my home, but now that I have basked in the splendour of a Russian Court, I wonder that my mother could ever have left it to marry an English nobleman. My heart goes out to these people; I would I were a man and the Tsar!"

The youthful enthusiasm of the Lady Zoë seemed reflected in young De Falbe's eyes. Yet he drew a deep breath as he replied:

"It is not always fairyland. You little know what you say when you envy the ruler of a nation!"

"To-morrow," said Lady Zoë, "is the 'grand folks' festival.' What a glorious day for the people! *We* cannot realise it, who are feasted night after night. I wish just for twenty-four hours I could change places with one of the poorest waifs, and feel his joy when he presses forward in the crowd of humanity to receive his presentation cup—his bread and sausage! Has it ever struck you, Hamilton, that after all I am little better than a prisoner, always guarded by a watchful attendant. Sometimes I think I would give my right hand to know—if only for a day—what real liberty meant."

She stretched out her arms, and the gesture reminded the boy of a starling freshly entrapped in a cage, beating its wings against the bars.

He took her hand reverently, and raised it to his lips.

The young Lady Zoë drew closer to his side.

"You *do* love me!" she whispered, flashing at him one of her ravishing glances.

With all the energy of youth, her boyish admirer swore everlasting fidelity.

"Dearest, I would die for you!"

The high-flown sentiment amused the girl. She laughed merrily.

"I don't want you to die, but I have thought of a wonderful scheme in which you might help me. I want to know what *real* life means—to disguise myself as a peasant, and mingle in a Russian holiday for the million! Ah, you look startled; it needs some daring I know. The crowd will be gigantic, almost terrible! Every phase of the lowest life—the poorest possible moujiks and peasants—will be heart to heart with us in the crush. No state ball will have ever held such a splendid feast of novelty. Imagine, Hamilton, you and I, garbed as the lower classes like wild, mad merry-makers, let loose on the Khodynski Plain, amidst dancing shops, music booths, and acres of merry-go-rounds! All ceremony thrown aside, we shall see a spectacle that will serve us with thought till we are old and grey!"

In her craving for a new sensation, the reckless Lady Zoë imparted her daring thirst for adventure to the susceptible spirit of the boy—talking down his protestations, ridiculing his calmer judgment, till she fired it with her own enthusiasm.

"I have obtained the garments," she whispered, "in which we are to escape. My maid thinks I am taking them home for use in private theatricals. You are to be a brown bearded moujik in the national red blouse. Is it not an intoxicating plan?"

Half fearful of the enterprise, yet too proud to be outdone by a girl, Hamilton de Falbe flung himself into the scheme, the victim of her startling whim.

"I am named Zoë after my great aunt," she said, "and all the Zoës in our family have been half crazy creatures, and I must live up to their reputation." Her eyes sparkled as she spoke. "The last Zoë did an awful thing—she—but no, I must not tell you—you are too young!"

The boy bit his lip. Then she laid her hand caressingly upon his arm.

"I was only teasing," she whispered. "I will give you the whole story in detail *after* the fête on the Khodynski Plain."

No sleep that night for Lady Zoë or her bold cavalier.

With great dexterity they evaded their guardians and attendants, and garbed as a peasant maid, by five o'clock in the early morning, the only daughter of an English

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nobleman was struggling through a good-natured, happy crowd of merry-makers. Hamilton clasped her closely in his encircling arm, as with the whole vast concourse they made for the booths.

"I'll get my coronation package if I die for it," she murmured gaily, scanning in wonder the strange foreign visages around her. "What harm is there in becoming one of these inoffensive, pleasure-seeking people?"

"The populace of all the villages round Moscow are hemming us in," laughed the boy undaunted. "We are paying for our beer and honey!"

The pressure grew worse and worse as these veritable "babes in the wood" were hustled with the mob. Even the light-hearted Zoë felt her head reel, and her breathing break forth in laboured gasps, as she stumbled along over the irregular ground. The workmen were rushing in from the manufactories, and their violence awoke terror in the tenderly-nurtured English girl.

In the appalling crush they were being positively hurled towards the sheds where the presentation mugs and free meals awaited the greedy masses, while amidst the rush of the people, Zoë and her escort were in imminent danger of being trampled under foot.

On—on—pressed the seething congregation, ever faster, ever denser! Some were disputing and striking each other in hot rage, many faces blanched livid with fear, as cut and bleeding they hastened forward to the goal.

"Oh! take me home for the love of Heaven," pleaded Zoë suddenly. "Hamilton, I am frightened, let us go back—quick—quick!"

Rash as her request appeared, Zoë's word was law. Without questioning the inadvisability of the proceeding young De Falbe turned against the stream.

The utter impossibility of making their way back now broke upon the girl's strained nerves, and losing her head completely in the crowd, she battled against the burning breath of tens of thousands, uttering piercing shrieks that rent the air. Her hysterical cries were the signal for a panic, and those behind hearing her screams, pushed eagerly forward—a mighty wave of impulsive humanity!

The women took up Zoë's cries, and in a moment a scene, painted in all its gruesome horror by the papers of to-day, so terribly tragic in its frenzied realism—broke across that plain of death! The seething mass went mad, there on the battlefield of fate they were fighting in anguish for light, space, freedom—escape!

Hamilton, though sparely built, seemed in that dread moment endowed with superhuman strength. He raised Zoë half fainting on his shoulders, and as if the sight of her helpless frame and beautiful features involuntarily compelled them, the strongest men formed round her and the boy. Like lions they fought with those, who, regardless of death-groans, beat their way on to plunder the line of booths. One, taller than the rest, snatched the fair girl from the failing arms of the still undaunted youth and bore her away.

The red blouse of Hamilton de Falbe was torn in shreds from his body, which, bleeding and mangled, sank with a groan to the earth.

"*Zoë!*" he cried, "*Zoë!*"

In the midst of the uproar, through fevered dreams, she heard the name, and a moment later forty or more bodies had swelled the heap of slain beneath which he lay. It was not in vain he had pledged his word: "Dearest, I would die for you!"

Then came a series of confused visions in the girl's brain. She was still borne on by the arms of strong men; groans and shrieks rang in her ears. She opened her eyes and saw that troops of firemen were carrying the victims to transport waggons. After this came a brief spell of insensibility, and later on the jolting over stones back into the city.

When she fairly awoke from her faint, it was to find herself in St. Catherine's Hospital. The nurse bending over her appeared surprised when the poor peasant girl spoke in English.

"Where is Hamilton?" she asked, starting up—"Hamilton de Falbe?"

"I don't know. What is your name?" answered a soft voice in Lady Zoë's native tongue.

"Never mind. We went to the fête for a joke, Hamilton and I." The girl raised herself on her elbow as she spoke, her cheek flushed, her eyes bright. "What happened? Why am I here? It was only a joke—*only a joke!*"

She repeated the words vehemently, but the nurse, herself sick at heart, could hear nothing but the piteous cries in the streets without, of a distracted and mourning multitude calling aloud:

"*Boje moi! Boje moi!*" (My God! my God!) The girl leapt from her bed, the horror of memory rushing back.

"I led him to his death, I killed Hamilton!" she said, speaking firmly, "*for the sake of a new sensation!*"

Her words were bitter—all the youth in her eyes died, while the life-long misery of regret froze her heart. Wrapping the torn shreds of clothing round her, she swept past the nurse with steady tread, hands clasped, and lips compressed.

Her mind was no longer confused. "Hamilton's murderess," she thought with painful irony, "must go to Hamilton's mother, and tell her about the *joke!* Oh! those happy, happy dead! It is the living who are accursed, and the saved who must suffer!"

So Lady Zoë escaped again in her rags, draining to the dregs her coveted cup of liberty.

WINIFRED GRAHAM.

A new Serial Story will commence in an early number of *Short Stories*, entitled, "**Pauper Blue Blood,**" from the pen of MISS WINIFRED GRAHAM, Author of "When the Birds Begin to Sing," "Through the Valley," "Six First-Class Passengers," etc., etc.

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AN INDIAN DRUG.

BY HUAN MEE,

Author of "The Czar's Diamond," "In Masquerade," "Alan Lindow's Wife," "Philip St. Voullé's Understudy," etc., etc.

CHAPTER VIII. (*continued.*)

HE has finished the review of the evidence, and now the jury only await his final words, while the thought runs through every mind: "Will they be for or against the prisoner."

The silence is fearful, agonising to all. He waits so long that anxious eyes are turned towards him as he sits, weighing in the balance his concluding words.

At last he sits erect again, and, like one deep breath, a smothered sigh of boiling excitement escapes the crowd.

"Gentlemen," he says, "I have laid the conflicting features of this trial as clearly before you as my power will admit. I have endeavoured to act justly and nothing more, making neither too much of one point, or too little of another, but submitting in true and proper order the whole of the evidence for and against the prisoner. It is for you in the impartial carrying out of your duties as citizens, to say whether this evidence points to the guilt or innocence of the prisoner charged with the terrible crime of murder. Let your council be marked by an undisguised endeavour to do justice and nothing more. That the ancient punishment, 'a life for a life,' is still demanded to-day must not weigh for or against the accused, for it is only for you to decide 'guilty or not guilty,' and for the law of the land to mete out stern and unfaltering judgment. Gentlemen, it is in your hands this mighty decision is left. May your council be a true and righteous endeavour to arrive at a verdict which shall be the honest verdict of you all, neither influenced by extraneous matters or by the opinion of others.

"Let each man act and judge for himself, and return a verdict according to the dictates of his own conscience. Guilty or not guilty. There can be no other decision."

With faces grave and set the jury solemnly rise and file from the box, the Judge retires, the prisoner passes from the dock, and a babel of voices immediately rises from the body of the Court.

Slowly the clock ticks off the minutes—one hour, then thirty minutes more.

What has happened!

The crowd has finished its excited converse; there is dead silence; and then the Judge enters again, the prisoner takes his stand in the box, and the jury return.

Nothing yet.

The Foreman says the jury desire the Judge shall read certain portions of his notes, which is done, and again they retire.

Then another hour, an hour of leaden minutes, and the jury once more re-enter, while beside the Judge there stands the Chaplain.

The man who is to say "Amen," if the verdict should be against the prisoner.

The prisoner stands swaying from side to side as his hands grip the edge of the dock in front of him, his face pale and fixed, and his eyes glaring with fearful intensity at the twelve men who are to decide his fate.

For a moment there is silence, and then the formal question is put: "Gentlemen, have you agreed upon your verdict?"

Like a rifle bullet in the crowded court comes the answer "No."

The jury have disagreed, there is no hope of a verdict ever being arrived at by them, and a torrent of applause breaks loose.

Calmly the Judge asks if they desire additional information, if they will retire longer and further consider the matter; but the Foreman replies it is useless, utterly impossible that they can ever agree, and so the case for the present ends.

The prisoner falls back fainting and helpless, the jury are dismissed, the Judge retires, the crowd disperses, and for a time all is over, but the gloomy horror will have to be repeated, and perhaps repeated again, until twelve men, with one unanimous voice, can decide the question: "Guilty or not guilty?"

CHAPTER IX.

A DISCOVERY.

"THE Maythorn Murder" trial had become a thing of more than local interest now. Throughout the length and breadth of the land the telegraphic wires had flashed the evidence of the most sensational case of the decade. The local Press had filled column upon column with verbatim reports, and the big London dailies had given a comprehensive condensation of the proceedings. For a whole week the populace of Maythorn had been in a state of tension, and now that the result, and to nearly everyone the unexpected result, of a disagreement amongst the jury was known a revulsion of feeling had set in and there were not wanting those who, the day before the most determined in their belief and assertion of the prisoner's guilt, were now ready, since twelve of their fellow countrymen had failed to arrive at a unanimous verdict, to admit that "there might be doubts," and Estlin Godfry was entitled to the benefit of them.

Indeed there were a few, a very few, who were already indulging in the favourite weakness of the sensation-loving public and were following the reprehensible but not unfrequent custom of elevating a criminal into a hero, a murderer into a martyr, admiring with a warped species of admiration the man who they assumed was clever enough to commit such a crime and leave no positive trace behind. Let it be said in their excuse they were only those who had heard the evidence from third parties, for those who had patiently listened to the long trial, to the mass of evidence, to the speeches of the learned counsel for the prosecution, and the able advocate for the defence, and had heard the clear, impressive, and impartial summing-up of the Judge, were for the most part in accord with the jury's decision that an agreement was impossible. But a disagreement meant a new trial, and it behoved the defence to be more active still, and try and throw a few more grains into the scale in Estlin Godfry's favour.

From morning till night they laboured, every possible and impossible line of defence was considered, and the well-known ground gone over again and again, the same road trodden to the same end, disappointment, a long, long lane with no turning.

The best detectives that London possessed had been enlisted on the side of Estlin Godfry, and many an individual was "shadowed" unknown to himself, shadowed for days, in the vain hope that something might arise to throw light even at the eleventh hour upon the mystery.

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But human patience and human skill were powerless, and the day of the new trial drew nearer with nothing further upon the side of the defence, and for all Estlin's friends knew, more powerful machinery still prepared for his destruction by the prosecutors of the State. The prosecutors of the State, who, acting under the authority of the Home Office, were no doubt instructed to obtain a verdict because in the minds of those in authority, murder had been committed and justice must be done. Who shall blame them? The administration of the law may be faulty, human intelligence has its limits, and in its short-sightedness may err, but for the safety of mankind the felon must be punished, the murderer must die. It is no vindictive action, it is the justice of man to man, the law of civilisation. Those who take life shall forfeit their own.

The coroner's jury who first inquired into the death of Joseph Monro had gone as far as their duty called them; they had found that he was poisoned, and in the further fulfilment of that duty had named who was, in their eyes, the murderer. The duty of the State was to give effect to their verdict, to accord a full and fair trial to the accused, and it had done so. The result so far had been a disagreement, then the dread horror must be gone through again and conviction or acquittal secured. Guilty or not guilty, there was no other way.

Once more, in the room behind the chemist's shop, Larrance and Shenfield sit opposite each other and discuss the painful story; once more they examine every link of the interminable chain that had been wound round and round Estlin Godfry, and, try as they will to put it from them, they cannot but fear that the new trial will result in his condemnation. Friends as they are of the accused, nay his partisans, the staunch believers in his innocence, they see how impossible it is to expect acquittal.

"I would give," Larrance is saying, "half what is left of my life to prove his innocence."

"And I would give every penny I possess, relinquish all my dreams of fame, my hopes of future recognition for my discoveries to see him free again."

A lad entering the shop at that instant, Larrance is left alone for a minute or so; he gazes through the glass door as Shenfield supplies the want of his customer. Shenfield is standing by the very spot where the poison was upset and as he turns to re-enter the room, the flash of inspiration, the gleam of intuition Larrance had waited and hoped for comes. Good God! could it be possible? They would, perhaps, hang Estlin on circumstantial evidence when here where they had strived so often to find the clue and failed, here, if his intuition were right, was a far wilder and more improbable circumstance that would save him and give him back, amid the cheering of his friends, to life and freedom.

The flush of excitement upon Larrance's face surprises Shenfield when he returns.

"Have you some idea?" he asks, "some hope at last?"

"Hope! more than hope; I think I see the truth. Shut the shop, there's not an instant to lose now."

The excitement of Larrance is contagious and in a few minutes the shutters have hidden the red flaring eye, and those who passed the door of Walter Shenfield's shop that night might, had they chosen to listen, have heard, not the secret of the Maythorn mystery, that Sidney Larrance had at last fathomed, but the sound of hammers and the sharp, shrill noise of a saw as its hungry teeth scrunched through woodwork.

Next morning a new sensation was afforded to the town, for the chemist's shop remained closed, its owner was not visible, and no legend upon the shutters acquainted the passer-by of the cause of this unprecedented occurrence.

While the wondering crowd stands gaping round the closed door of Walter Shenfield's establishment in Maythorn, the proprietor himself and Sidney Larrance are closeted in London with the solicitors for the defence, who listen with attentive ears to the astounding opinion that Sidney Larrance is enunciating.

Then cabs are requisitioned and they drive with all speed to the Home Office, carrying with them a bulky package, that Larrance never loses sight of. The urgency of their case obtains them an immediate audience with the constituted authorities, and little difficulty is experienced in securing permission to institute a thorough search through the contents of the writing-table in the study of the late Mr. Monro, which had been sealed by the police after the event, acting upon instructions communicated to them by the Treasury.

A messenger is dispatched to Scotland Yard for an able representative to be present at the investigation in the study. The Indian expert is telegraphed for, and arrives carrying a small square box with a perforated zinc top containing a couple of live rabbits, then the earliest possible train is taken to Maythorn, and the party drive from the station to Merton House, where already summoned by wire they find awaiting them the Inspector of the local police, Dr. Hill, and Mr. Grindley. They silently mount the stairs to the study, and the door is closed and locked, the detective taking the precaution to remove the key and block the keyhole from inquisitive eyes by covering the aperture with a square of black court-plaster which he takes from his pocket-book.

CHAPTER X.

THE TRUTH.

FROM the *Maythorn Chronicle*, Saturday, October 18th:

Truly the age of miracles is not yet past, for we have had one performed in our very midst, so astounding and so remarkable that all that is left us to do is to sit and wonder how so great a thing has come to pass. Inscrutable are the workings of Providence; we can only accept its decree with thankfulness that those who mete out the laws of this country have been saved from yet another judicial murder, stayed from doing yet another innocent man to death, by the accidental discovery of evidence sufficient to prove his entire innocence a thousand times over.

Why is it that the whole world does not shrink from capital punishment upon merely circumstantial evidence? Judicial murder simply for the love of vengeance? A month ago a jury disagreed, and failed to find a verdict at the first trial of Estlin Godfry, in what proportion we cannot say, but let those who pressed for a verdict of 'guilty' then, thank the more merciful of their body that they have saved them from the deliberate murder of a man for a crime of which he was completely innocent. We are abolitionists. We frankly avow it, and while such cases as these exist, can never alter our opinion.

Without recapitulating the evidence, well known doubtless to all, upon which this young man, Estlin Godfry, was placed upon trial for his life, let us review the one and only day of the second trial—the day which saw the man set free who might have been dead, hanged, murdered a week ago.

Never has the Court been so crowded as upon that day, never have we heard the whole mass of people rise upon the conclusion of a case, and unchecked, unawed by the ponderous majesty of the law, give vent to their feelings as only Englishmen can with one wild, hearty cheer of true enthusiasm, the enthusiasm of fair play, our ever cherished birthright. That a great and new point was to be put in evidence upon that morning was in some occult way known to all, but upon which side was unknown, and the crowd waited eagerly for the opening of the case.

One glance at the prisoner as he entered was sufficient; there was no doubt upon which side now. The sparkle of excitement glowed in his eyes, but his face had none of the drawn horror of the last terrible proceedings, and as though they had received an electric shock the onlookers thrilled as they wondered what had been discovered, and where was the false link in the extraordinary chain of circumstantial evidence which so tightly encompassed Estlin Godfry a month ago.

Excitement upon excitement, sensation upon sensation, the case is opened in a few words by the Judge, who speaks of new

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developments, and instead of the counsel for the Crown, the learned Q.C. for the defence rises and proposes to at once call a witness. There is no demur; the learned counsel for the Crown bows and smiles to his opponent, who bows again. As a lesson in legal deportment it is a pretty sight; in a murder trial it is unique. The counsel for the prisoner calls one witness, Sidney Larrance, and a tall broad shouldered fellow unceremoniously elbows the briefless striplings and enters the box. How we should like to pile up column after column in admiration of Sidney Larrance. A giant in form and intellect, a man who had worked untiringly and found nothing, and then, like a lightning flash, by a brilliant stroke of genius discovered a clue and worked it to a proof that had established the innocence of his friend before the Home Office had had time to gasp for breath. Hercules, we salute you; you have overthrown the slowest and most ponderous machine of modern times.

With the utmost straightforwardness, speaking in a calm steady voice, as though his story was of a most everyday character, he gives his evidence. He had worked hard for weeks to help his friend, but in vain. He had failed, and up to the very last moment of the trial had discovered nothing. After that trial, when the jury disagreed, he went again to the shop of chemist Shenfield, there to talk and further discuss with him, still looking for a loophole of escape for Estlin. He had always thought Estlin Godfry innocent, he says—never doubted it for a moment, and, strange to say, there is loud applause in Court! What a fickle thing is the great British Public! Led gently on by counsel, Sidney Larrance comes back to the point. He owns, does this giant, that he suffers from presentiments, and has a wonderful intuition, and, although we are prepared to hear his lordship say that neither of these gifts can be admitted as evidence, he makes no sign, but, more wonderful still, nods encouragingly towards the witness.

"While we were standing talking," the witness continues, "a boy entered the shop, and Shenfield left me for a moment to attend to him. The boy made a small purchase, handing a penny in payment, and as Shenfield left the counter to return to me, he dropped the coin through a slit into the till. A slit that had been cut in the mahogany top of the counter in order to avoid the necessity of opening the till drawer when change was not required. In that instant the whole solution of the mystery, like a flood of molten fire, surged upon my brain, and I stood breathless, flushed, astounded at the revelation."

With an inspired gleam of enthusiasm the witness gazes around the Court expecting to see every face brighten as at last the true explanation of the great mystery was put into their very hands, but desire as we may to say that frantic cheering echoed through the building, we must, with a due regard to veracity, state that only utter bewilderment was expressed on every countenance, and that our brains were unable to follow as yet the reasoning of him of gigantic frame and intellect.

A section cut from the counter of Walter Shenfield's shop was then brought into court and examined by the jury with perplexed interest, also a model of the shop showing the position of the counter and the till. Oh, the excitement of those few moments. What a new sensation for our worn-out lives. We felt we were on the eve of a grand discovery; we held our breath and hoped that the counsel for the defence would lay the case before us as gradually as possible, making the most of every point as it came along, until the light that we as yet were blind to, burst upon us in one glorious flood.

For a time at least the evidence of Sidney Larrance seemed to be over. The eminent Q.C. for the defence rose and impressively tapped the section of the counter.

"Gentlemen," he said, "in the model of the shop you will see a portion of the counter marked number one, that is the section you have examined, and it is upon that part that a bottle of deadly poison was upset upon the night previous to the sudden death of Mr. Joseph Monro, who died by poisoning by that identical drug. Upon the charge of murdering his uncle, Joseph Monro, my client, Mr. Estlin Godfry, is before you to-day, the chief evidence against him being the fact that that bottle, now destroyed, belonged to him, and that he had two other bottles containing more of this deadly extract. I shall now call witnesses necessary for the placing of sufficient evidence before you to enable you to at once acquit him."

What an assertion. Then an acquittal was certain. Excitement boiled faster than ever. The witnesses which followed, and their evidence point by point is laid before our readers in the full report of the proceedings in this issue, let us hasten to the *dénoûment*. At last it came. Weary, formal evidence was over, and again the counsel for the defence rose.

"Gentlemen," he said, "upon this identical spot the animal in its death struggle upset the unstoppered phial." He fumbled for a moment and then produced a tiny bottle from his vest pocket. "This phial," he continued, "is identical in size, the only difference being that it contains nothing more deadly than water from our local waterworks. It stood upon this spot," and he placed the bottle upon the section of the counter. "Gentlemen, carry your minds back to that night. The two men watch the animal to which the poison has been administered, it dies almost without a shiver, and shocked for the moment they place it down upon the counter. It is dead. But no, it convulsively rolls over once and—murders Joseph Monro. So!"

He unstoppered the phial and then deliberately tipped it over with his finger; it fell upon the counter, and the water was spilled. He paused for a moment and gazed at the bewildered faces in the Court, and then with a dramatic gesture suddenly dragged the till drawer open and held it towards the Court, showing where a few wet spots marked the descent of the fluid as it had trickled through the slit in the counter.

What a gasp of amazement. People were too far gone to applaud, they simply sat and gazed before them, wondering if it were not all a dream, a dream from a sensational novel.

"Gentlemen," the counsel continued, and his voice seemed to arouse to life the stunned faculties of the jury, "in that till upon that night lay half-a-dozen postage stamps face downwards, and as the poison trickled through the few drops fell upon the gum, dried during the night, and in the morning these very stamps were purchased from the chemist by the late Mr. Joseph Monro. There are now two remaining. Two were used by the deceased, two were experimented with by experts with fatal results upon the animals treated, and two we have here."

Why trouble our readers by further recapitulation of evidence or technical points? Let us leave that and speak of the wild scene which followed when the crowd without took up the cheers of those within. Deafening applause within the very precincts of the Court itself which a learned Judge showed no disposition to check. Let us speak of the intense excitement in the town when Estlin Godfry was a free man once more, of the crowd surging round and wringing his hand again and again. Let us write of the natural joy of the people that an innocent man had not suffered wrongly, but let us not forget amidst it all that surely such a case as this is the greatest argument of all against circumstantial evidence, for every innocent man does not have upon his behalf, as advocate, a friend inspired by Providence with an intuition so marvellous as to shatter to atoms the whole evidence of the Crown by one swinging blow from the sledge hammer of Truth.

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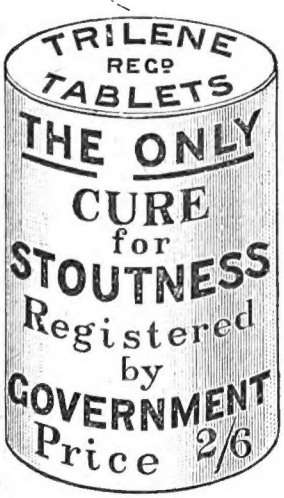

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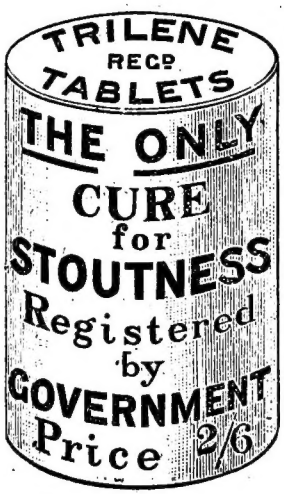

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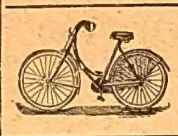

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